

THE
D E B A T E

ON A
M O T I O N

FOR THE

A B O L I T I O N

OF THE

S L A V E - T R A D E, &c.

On Monday the 2d of April, 1792.

A GREAT number of PETITIONS* were presented, praying for the ABOLITION of the SLAVE TRADE.

The Right Honourable Mr. DUNDAS presented one from the Inhabitants of the City of Edinburgh, and SIR WATKIN LEWES one from the Livery of London in Common Hall assembled.—Referred to the Committee on the Slave Trade.

Mr. WILBERFORCE moved that all the Evidence given on this Trade be referred to the Committee.—Ordered.

He then moved the Order of the Day, which was “for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House, to consider of the circumstances of the African Slave Trade.”

* The whole number of Petitions presented to this Day, was 502.

The House resolved itself into a Committee accordingly,
SIR WILLIAM DOLBEN in the Chair :

MR. WILBERFORCE.—In entering on the great business of this day, a business in itself of the first importance, and which, after having so long occupied the minds of men, is at this moment the subject of universal expectation and solicitude, it is natural to imagine that I must feel no small degree of diffidence and apprehension. It is, however, a satisfaction to me to reflect, that it will not be necessary for me to take up so much of the time of the House, as I have felt myself compelled to do on former occasions ; for besides that I might well be content to leave the task of enforcing the proposition I shall bring forward, to the greater abilities and more powerful eloquence of those by whom I have the honour to be supported, the whole of this subject has been already so thoroughly investigated ; every part of it has been so canvassed and scrutinized, that it may be sufficient for me now merely to refer you to our past discussions, and to spare the House and myself the pain of a laborious and minute detail.

I have before had occasion to remark, that nothing has tended more to prevent the impartial and candid consideration of our arguments, than the indiscriminate censures which have sometimes been really cast on the whole body of West Indians. There may have been those who, suffering their passions to hurry them to hasty and immature conclusions, have connected with the evils of the system, the personal character of every individual embarked in it, as being closely and inseparably associated ; the charge rashly brought has been indignantly repelled ; heat and acrimony have prevailed on both sides, reproaches and invectives have been mutually retorted, parties have been formed with all their consequent effects of prejudice and bitterness, the West Indians in this state of things have grown incapable of listening dispassionately to the voice of reason, and many perhaps of the very best and most benevolent amongst them have been the most warm, because most conscious of the injustice of the accusations they deemed cast

on them, and resenting and spurning at them with emotions of honest disdain.

The House will do me the justice to recollect, whatever may have been said to the contrary, that this is a language I have never held, nor have I been kept from it by motives of decorum or of personal civility; it is a language to which in my heart I have never assented, and which has always appeared to me not only injudicious and impolitic, but contrary to truth and justice, and to what abundant experience has taught us of the nature of the human mind: and I the rather make this declaration at the outset of my speech, in order, that if in the course of what I shall say on a subject which cannot but excite the strongest emotions in any man who is not dead to the feelings of his nature, any over-warm or too general expressions should escape me, it may be understood what are the cool deliberate opinions of my mind. I wish to speak the words of conciliation; I wish particularly to call on the Gentlemen of the West Indies to accompany me in my progress; I call upon them to investigate with me fully and fairly the various evils arising from the Slave Trade, and those evils especially, which belong to the West Indies. If I can but bring them to do so, I am persuaded we cannot differ in the result: I cannot but believe that they will acknowledge the defects of their own system, and deplore the evils with which it so abounds; for Sir, though I have acknowledged that there are many Owners of Slaves of benevolent tempers and generous hearts, who would be glad to use their absolute power for purposes of kindness and beneficence, yet this must not reconcile us to the system of West Indian slavery itself; pregnant as it is with great and innumerable miseries. A Trajan and an Antoninus do not reconcile me to a despotic monarchy; we should distinguish in these cases between what belongs to the person and what belongs to the system; we should rejoice indeed in a splendid exception to the ordinary character of tyranny; but not allow ourselves to be thereby seduced into an approbation of tyranny.

Yet even under a Trajan and an Antoninus the fatal effects of this system were but too discernible, though more flagrant and palpable under a Nero and Caligula. An impartial West Indian, therefore, instead of being incensed by the frankness of my investigation, should rather join me in it, and assist me in tracing the mischiefs to their proper source ; these will appear by no means greater than might be expected from considering the various circumstances of the present case. It has been justly remarked, that aristocracy is a worse form of government than monarchy, because the people have been subject to many tyrants instead of one ; but if this be true, what shall we say to the present case, where despotic power is not the privilege of high birth, or of extraordinary eminence, or wealth, or talents, but where it is an article to be bought at market like any other commodity, by every man who has £.40 in the world. There is often an elevation and liberality of mind produced by the consciousness of superior rank and consequence and authority, which serve in some degree to mitigate the fierceness of unrestrained power, and counteract the evils of which it is naturally productive ; but when it comes into the possession of the base and the vulgar, the evils will then be felt in their fullest extent. The causes of this we will not stop to examine, but the truth itself is important, and it bears directly on the present question. It suggests to us the wretched state of the Slaves in the West Indies, where they are often liable to the uncontroled domination of men of all ranks, understandings, tempers, often perhaps of the most ignorant and worthless, and meanest of the human race. This is no picture of the imagination, but the very sentiment which the scene itself impresses on the mind of a judicious observer. Every man almost who can have a horse here, might be possessed of a slave there ; who is there that considers this, but must expect to find scenes of wretchedness and cruelty, on which it is impossible to look, without shame and indignation ?

But let us recollect, that this is not the whole of the present case ; for of the more opulent and more liberal West India proprietors

prictors of West India properties, how many are there who are absent from their own estates, residing in this country, or in other parts of Europe? They send across the Atlantic, declarations and directions dictated by the humanity of their own minds; but the execution of these, must be left to persons of a description altogether different. This forms a very leading feature in the delineation of the present system, and I wish every Gentleman to consider it in its various bearings and relations. It is not I only that make this remark, or the friends of the Abolition of the Slave Trade; it was long ago strongly insisted on by Mr. Long, the historian of Jamaica; he pointed out the abuse; he specified the many evils which flowed from it; he stated that the insurrections had chiefly been found to break out among the Slaves of Absentee proprietors; he regretted that often the Manager had an interest altogether distinct from that of the Owner; that it was frequently his object to make large crops of sugar, regardless of the cruelties to be exercised on the Slaves; or of the ruinous load of expence to be incurred, in purchasing new Slaves, to replace such as should be worn out by excessive labour; and then at last, says he, they retreat like a rat from a house in flames, and go with the credit of large crops on their backs to another part of the island. The truth of these animadversions has been confirmed by the positive testimony of many respectable witnesses; they conversed on the spot with the Managers, and it was easily to be collected, nay, sometimes it was frankly confessed, that this was their main principle.

This alone would be sufficient to shew that the orders of the absentee Planters, however good, will not be executed, and will be constantly operating to defeat the effects of their benevolence. But it would not be necessary to shew this distinction of *interest*, many causes concur to produce a difference of *feelings*; the very circumstances of these poor people being distinguished by their colour from the rest of the community, prevents their calling forth the feelings of sympathy; they are a marked species, they are looked upon as a different race of Beings, and are not considered as being entitled

entitled to the same humanity and tenderness, which the worst of men would allow to be the right of those whom they acknowledge to be their fellow creatures. Consider how in the case of minds originally tender, the feelings will be blunted by habit; reckon up all these various circumstances and estimate their amount, and you will naturally conclude, that the situation of the Slaves in the West Indies, must indeed be deplorable.

I shall not here detail the particulars of their state, having done so minutely on a former occasion: I then proved my assertions by the positive testimony of our own witnesses; by various circumstances and considerations arising out of the very nature of the case, or suggested by scrutinizing and laying together different assertions from our Opponents. I then specified many general evils resulting from the nature of the system, and shewed its tendency to render the state of the Slave to be lamented in what regards his food, cloathing, lodging &c. Legal protection I shewed he had none, and should be again ready to bring indisputable proof of the assertion, if it should be denied; but I would gladly spare myself the painful recital. I willingly pass over the detail of all those circumstances of degradation to which they are subjected, their being worked in the fields under the whip like cattle, instead of being treated like moral agents, capable of forecast and reflection; their being often branded; their being excepted out of the system of decency, and a thousand other disgraceful and humiliating particulars. Surely I must believe, when all these things are considered, that the gentlemen of the West Indies themselves will eagerly join with us in endeavouring to do away these grievances, and put an end to miseries so complicated and intolerable. I will do them the justice to believe that they have looked after a remedy, but they have looked in vain; they have not found it; nor will they ever find it but in the Proposition which I bring forward. I deliver it as my decided opinion, the result of a careful investigation of the whole of this great subject, that the only practicable remedy is *stopping the further importation of Slaves from Africa.*

What

What other remedy has been suggested ? Colonial regulations ! Into this subject I went at large when the Question of Abolition was last before the House, and I could now only repeat the arguments I urged on that occasion ; the hinge on which it all turned was the inadmissibility of Negro evidence ; the effects of this have been frankly avowed by many of our opponents themselves, and are indeed so obvious as to render it superfluous to insist on them. What would be the situation of the bulk of the people in this country if Gentlemen of £.500 per annum were alone admitted as witnesses ? But the case in the West Indies is much worse : for where, two or three White Men being on a plantation, it might be hoped one would come forward against the other (provided the perpetrator of any enormity had been so imprudent as to commit it in his presence, instead of taking the opportunity of his being out of the way) he would be kept back by a thousand considerations of mutual connivance, of similarity of situation, of intimate connection—They are fellow-managers, brother-overseers, whom even the *esprit de corps* would prevent from undertaking so invidious an office, as that of criminating each other.

But colonial regulations, if futile and ineffectual for the protection of the Slave, would be abundantly operative in another way, if it were attempted to carry them into execution. If you were to give them the protection of laws, not nominally but really, not the shadow but the substance of Civil Rights, you would awake in their minds a consciousness of freedom which would only turn alike to their ruin and that of their masters. It is in vain to attempt to reconcile impossibilities, freedom and slavery cannot be made to coalesce : instead of being satisfied with what they should get, they would only more feel the want of what should be withheld from them ; the privileges which should be granted them would only serve to render the galling and ignominious distinctions under which they should still be kept more irritating and vexatious ; insurrections would too soon follow, and the whole be one scene of confusion and slaughter. Look to the history of past insurrec-

tions, and you will find these assertions confirmed by actual experience. Let Gentlemen recollect the immense disproportion of the Blacks and Whites in our Islands, and consider it in conjunction with the positions I have been laying down, and it is impossible we can differ in the conclusion : but if such is their present wretched and degraded state, surely there is no man who must not long for that happy moment when they can be rescued from it without danger. What I have said suggests the great cause which tends to continue them in their state of degradation, and even almost to render it necessary for their own no less than for their master's comfort and security ; this is no other than the constant influx of slaves from Africa ; torn from their homes for ever, resenting the wrongs they have suffered ; looking on their masters and on all around them not as friends and protectors, but as enemies and tyrants, they are ever ready to rise and wreak their vengeance on their enemies.

This was acknowledged long before I brought forward the Question of Abolition ; Mr. Long has argued at great length on the danger of importing such numbers of Africans, "27,000 slaves imported in 2 years, and our importations are now still greater, are alone sufficient to account for mutinies, insurrections, &c." and the rebellions in 1755 and 6 he states to have been occasioned by the imported natives of the Gold Coast. This is not only Mr. Long's doctrine, but that of every reasonable and observing man. I met with a curious proof of it the other day in a pamphlet lately published in Carolina, by a planter, who was endeavouring, not apparently actuated by motives of justice and humanity, but of policy, to continue the prohibition of African Slaves, which had already subsisted for some years ; he urges various arguments, but that on which he chiefly insists is the danger of an insurrection ; he reminds his countrymen of a former rebellion in South Carolina, occasioned by the rising of the Angola Slaves, thence vulgarly called the Gulla war ; he points to the island of St. Domingo, where says he, you have a striking exemplification of the truth of my position.

And this leads me, Sir, to say a few words on the late unhappy

unhappy transactions in that unfortunate Island ; I shall not, however, go at large into them at present, but must reserve to myself the right of doing so, if it should be rendered necessary by any thing urged in the course of the debate. I felt it my duty to investigate the causes of the disturbances in question, and I do declare myself decidedly convinced, and will enter if required into proof of the assertion, that they did not arise from any attempts to abolish the Slave Trade, or from the efforts of Societies established in France for that purpose. The case was simply this ; the free people of colour, though the privileges of citizens were bestowed on them by law a century ago, had never in fact been admitted to the enjoyment of them, but had been treated, though many of them men of property and of education, as beings of an inferior order ; the animosities had almost grown to their height, and had nearly broken out into actual hostilities before the period of the French Revolution ; what passed then and since, the violence with which the white inhabitants of the Island asserted their own rights, whilst with equal warmth they were denying them to the men of colour, the contradictory decrees of the National Assembly, sometimes granting the desired immunities, sometimes retracting the grants, and thus trifling with their feelings, and working them up into a rage too big to be suppressed ; agreements in the Island made and broken as convenience suggested ! What wonder if the ferment occasioned by all these circumstances, and the favourable opportunity afforded by these divisions in which their masters were occupied, produced a general rising of the slaves, who had rebelled before in conjunctures less suited to their purpose ? They did rise, and dreadful was the consequence. No man, I am sure, deplores more than myself those cruel and humiliating transactions, and I make this very Motion because I deplore them, and would in our own Islands prevent the repetition. Consider the immense disproportion of numbers ; there are now in Jamaica near 300,000 slaves, and but about 20,000 whites of all ages and descriptions : We are every year importing into that Island a greater strength of blacks than there

is of whites to be opposed to them. Where is this to stop ? Do you seriously mean to continue this system ? I should really have thought the West India Gentlemen would themselves have implored us, if we had entertained no such design, to arrest the further progress of this growing and pernicious malady. Thus, sir, were the **SAFETY** of the Islands only in question, you could not but agree to my proposition.

But I must recur to what I before laid down, that these importations do not tend more to produce confusion and disorder than to retain the unhappy slaves themselves in their actual state of wretchedness and degradation. It is this that would even render it unsafe to punish white men for the ill treatment of their slaves, except very rarely and in the most atrocious instances. But surely, Sir, we cannot bear to leave these poor creatures thus sunk below the level of their species ; and I am persuaded the West India Gentlemen themselves would be glad to afford them relief ; they would be glad, I trust, to put them under protection of laws, but this must be done rationally and soberly. After what I have said, I am not afraid of being told I design to emancipate the slaves ; I will not indeed deny that I wish to impart to them the blessings of freedom ; who is there that knows their value, but must join with me in this desire ? But the freedom I mean is that of which at present they, alas ! are not capable. True Liberty is the child of Reason and of Order ; it is indeed a plant of celestial growth, but the soil must be prepared for its reception : he that would see it flourish, and bring forth its proper fruits, must not think it sufficient to let it shoot as it will in unrestrained licentiousness :

*Luxuriantia competet, nimis aspera fano
Lævabit cultu, virtute carentia tollet.*

Would you then impart to them these inestimable benefits, take away that cause which at present obstructs their introduction ; nor would the good effects of stopping the importations be confined to the slaves, nor would the safety of the Islands only be

be thereby promoted, it would tend to the planter's benefit in another view : by the facility of purchasing African slaves he is often drawn into fresh expences, he is at length plunged into inextricable embarrassments, and wishes at length this Channel of Supply had been shut up from him. This evil also was insisted on by Mr. Long, the Historian of Jamaica, who actually proposed a temporary prohibition of the importation of African slaves with a view to its prevention. I hope it will not be deemed invidious that I so often quote the work of this Gentleman, but rather a proof of the respect I pay to its authority, and I appeal to it the more willingly, because it was written long before the Abolition of the Slave Trade had become the subject of public discussion. But I frankly acknowledge that the consideration of the planter's benefit, from stopping the importations, does not interest me in any degree so much as that to be thence derived by the unhappy slaves. Losing by degrees the painful recollection of their native and early connections, conceiving new attachments to their dwelling places, to their families, to their masters, they would gradually rise in the scale of beings ; no longer ready every moment to start into insurrections, they would cease to be the continual objects of the planter's jealousy and suspicion ; it would be no longer necessary for the general safety to extinguish in them the principle of moral agency ; they would feel more respectable in themselves and be more respected by others, and by degrees, the harshness of their present bondage being transformed into the mildness of patriarchal servitude, they would become capable of still greater blessings and more ennobling privileges : and Gentlemen will observe it is the peculiar merit of this Plan, that though its full effects cannot be produced at once, we are all the while tending to their complete enjoyment, with a uniform and uninterrupted course. The slaves will daily grow happier, the Islands safer, the planters richer ; the whole will be like the progress of vegetation, the effects are not at first perceptible, but the great principle operating in ten thousand ways, will gradually change the whole face of things, and substitute fertility and beauty in

the place of barrenness and desolation. Who is there that contemplates this delightful prospect, but must long to have it realized ? It is, I am persuaded, our common wish, our universal, our impatient expectation.

But it was formerly urged that this was a remedy which, however desirable in itself, the Islands were not as yet in a state to admit. It was contended that they could not keep up their numbers without farther importations from Africa ; that were these stopped, their gangs would continually be growing weaker and weaker, until at length their estates should be thrown wholly out of cultivation. When the question of Abolition was last before the House, I went into this subject so much at large, that I need only now advert to what I then urged ; if it be thought necessary I shall repeat and confirm it. It was then made out by my Right Honourable Friend with his usual accuracy, and that too from documents furnished by our opponents themselves, that the Islands were actually keeping up their Stocks of Slaves. His calculations, so far from being refuted, have not, that I know of, even been denied ; and the fact was confirmed by the positive testimony of a Gentleman of great experience examined in the Island of Jamaica. I shewed you that it had taken place under every possible circumstance of disadvantage ; that the various evils under which the slaves laboured, and above all the general inattention to the breeding system, would have led us to expect a great decrease ; but that in spite of them all, great and numerous as they were, an increase having begun to take place, we were warranted in believing that the amendment of one or two particulars out of many, would alone be sufficient to render the increase rapid ; and we found that Negro Slaves had actually increased considerably in various countries, and climates, and situations, many of them extremely ill adapted to their constitutions. I pointed out also many modes whereby, if it should be deemed necessary, the chasm could be filled up which some might think would be occasioned by immediate abolition : a great supply of hands might be obtained by turning into the field some of

the superfluous domestics, with whose immense number every Gentleman who knew any thing of the West Indies was perfectly acquainted. Improvements in machinery were suggested; the transfer of the lands from sugar to cotton, which requiring fewer hands would let loose a number of labourers for other purposes; these and other modes were proposed, whereby the quantity of laborious industry might receive supplies. But what above all other circumstances I must now insist on, is this: that five years importations have since taken place; had there therefore been any small error in the calculations of my Right Honourable Friend, or had I strained my subsidiary arguments a little too far, it is impossible to deny but that this must now be more than rectified, and that the Islands are at length in a state to suffer not even a temporary inconvenience from the admission of this salutary expedient. If therefore you have any regard for the happiness of the slaves, or for the safety of the Islands; nay if you are even dead to these powerful incentives, and were alive only to considerations of the planters interest, you could not but consent to the measure I recommend to you, of *stopping the further importation of African Slaves.*

And now, Sir, abstaining for a while from those topics, which I confess are after all the nearest to my heart, I will slightly touch on what was originally said to be other disadvantages that would follow from the Abolition. I wish to add up every possible item before I proceed to place any thing on the opposite side of the account, by this mode it will more plainly appear how much the balance is in my favour. It was originally urged that the African trade was a nursery for seamen, and that its abolition would therefore be highly injurious to its naval strength; this part of the subject was very early taken up by a Gentleman whose services in the whole of this great cause can never be over-rated (I need hardly say I allude to Mr. Clarkson); he asserted, as the result of a long and laborious inquiry, that of the sailors employed in the African trade, between a fifth and a sixth actually died, and that they seldom brought home more than half of their original

ginal crews. Nothing was more vehemently repelled or more obstinately resisted than these positions, till at length having long borne with these clamorous contradictions, we moved last year for the muster rolls, documents prepared by our opponents themselves, and kept in their possession, and which cannot therefore be supposed to have been fabricated to serve our purpose ; from these Mr. Clarkson's calculations were fully justified. It appeared that of 12,263 persons, the number of the original crews, there had died 2,643, the average length of their voyages being twelve months ; whilst on the contrary in the West India trade, in which the length of the voyage was seven months, of 7,640, the number of the original crews, there had died but 118. But the loss by deaths was not the whole loss to the country ; for besides the broken constitutions of the survivors, which rendered many of them for the rest of their lives incapable of the duties of their profession, so many left their ships in consequence of ill usage, that they seldom brought home more than half of the persons they had taken out. This last circumstance was attempted to be accounted for, from the natural capriciousness of sailors ; and it was said that they ran away in as great number from the West India as from the Guinea ships. The direct contrary appeared from the muster rolls, and this too, though from the different ways of paying them in the two trades, their forfeiting little or nothing by quitting the West India men, but much by quitting the Guinea men, the reverse might be naturally expected. I could say much more on this subject, and in particular I could open to you such scenes of cruelty to these unhappy men, as must excite at once the concern and indignation of every man who feels for that mass of his fellow citizens to which this nation owes so much of her safety and of her honour. But I will abstain from this painful detail, and only repeat what I just now observed, that in the outset of this business nothing was more obstinately denied than our now no longer controverted assertions concerning the loss of seamen. This may serve to procure us credit on those points which are still in dispute, and

prove

prove that it is not necessary for our opponents to be correct in order to be positive.

I will but just touch on the effects of immediate Abolition on our general policy, on our commerce and manufactures, and on the prosperity of the places whence the Slave Trade is chiefly carried on. We have seen from the accounts upon your table how small a part it constitutes of the trade of Bristol and of Liverpool ; and that it has become less profitable of late, cannot be denied by those Gentlemen who asserted that the regulations actually introduced would make it a losing concern : for though it were said that in the heat of opposition they might have pushed their assertions a little too far, yet it will be hardly allowed them at one moment to speak of an actual loss, and at another of a gain so great that it would ruin those opulent towns to be deprived of it. After the statements we have lately heard of the public finances and our immense exportations of British manufactures, who is there that will insist much on our exportations to Africa to the amount of about 400,000l. or who that will not admit we might soon establish a commerce with that country more beneficial and more innocent, were we to put a stop to this inhuman traffick in the flesh and blood of our fellow creatures ?

Nor can it even be urged that the *immediate* Abolition of the Slave Trade would in this view be productive of considerable present inconvenience. Consider what happens both at the commencement and close of every war, how in the former case the existing channels for the conveyance of our manufactures are suddenly barred up. The system of political œconomy is of so complicated a nature, that in innumerable instances we find the effect of the evils we had apprehended prevented by means, of which before we had no actual ascertainment or distinct perception. I remember it is observed by Mr. Adam Smith, in his incomparable Treatise on the Wealth of Nations, that at the conclusion of every war more than 100,000 soldiers and sailors are at once discharged ; and we see no alteration in the wages of labour, or in any

other particular which the sudden influx might be expected to affect.

As to another branch of national policy, that I mean which concerns the extension of our cultivation in the West India Islands, I will say nothing at present. From our evidence it abundantly appears, that the opening of new plantations with imported Africans is a system the most ruinous to the individuals concerned ; and the intelligent reasonings of Mr. Irvine must have convinced the House that if this extension of cultivation be considered only in a national view, it is by no means to be desired by any real well-wisher to the secure and abiding prosperity of this country. Thus, Sir, it appears that, leaving Africa wholly out of the question, Justice and Humanity would dictate to us the Abolition of the Slave Trade in the strongest terms, as the only sure expedient for bringing the slaves into that state of comfort wherein it must be our common wish to see them placed ; and that this measure is enforced on us by the principles of sound policy, and a regard to the political interests of the British empire.

But, Sir, though I have suffered myself to dwell so long on these considerations, I now proceed to that part of the subject which indeed most interests my heart. **LOOK TO THE CONTINENT OF AFRICA**, and there you will behold such a scene of horrors as no tongue can express, no imagination can represent to itself. The effects of this inhuman commerce are indeed such that we lend our assent to them reluctantly: yet they are proved so clearly, that it is not possible for any man to doubt of their reality ; and were positive testimony defective, the reason of the thing would have rendered it altogether unnecessary. How can it but follow, from our going to that country, and offering our commodities to the petty Chieftains for the bodies of their subjects, but that they will not be very nice in the means they take to procure the articles, by the sale of which they are to supply themselves with the gratifications of appetites we have diligently and but too successfully taught them to indulge.

One mode they take is that of committing depredations upon

upon each other's territories ; and the very nature and character of wars in Africa is such as might have been expected from the great motive from which they originate : they are a sort of predatory expeditions, of which the chief object is the acquisition of Slaves ;—not but that, as it is natural to imagine, these often prove the occasion of more general and continual hostilities, inasmuch as they greatly add to the causes of dissention between neighbouring communities.— When on a former occasion I urged somewhat to this effect, I remember the direct contrary was asserted, and in direct defiance of reason and common sense it was said, that wars had never been caused by the Slave Trade. I repeated my reasoning, and urged that it was not to be expected that I could be able to adduce specific instances in a country where letters were unknown, and the very existence, as well as the causes, of past events, must in general be soon forgotten.— Again, I was challenged to produce a single instance : the natural barbarity of these people was descended on as being alone sufficient to render Africa a scene of general carnage, and in particular the cruelties of a certain King of Dahomey were enlarged on, and the dreadful slaughter which attended his invasion of a neighbouring kingdom. To say nothing of the unfairness of extending to the whole of that vast district from which we collect slaves, what at the utmost was only proved of a single kingdom, I must own I was a little shaken in my belief of the representations of the state of this very kingdom itself, when I heard it said by another Gentleman, (who though not favourable to the cause to which I wished well, gave his evidence with a frankness and fairness which did him great honour, I mean Mr. Devaynes,) that the Dahomans were a very happy people. But how was I astonished, how did I admire the strange coincidence, when I found in this very king of Dahomey, the very specific instance that had been required of me ; and that these very cruelties of his, in the conquest of Whydah, on which such stress was laid, were committed by him in a war undertaken with the view of punishing the adjacent nation for having stolen away some of his subjects, for the purpose of selling

them for Slaves. This curious anecdote was brought to my notice by a noble friend * of mine, to whose friendship on this, as on many other occasions, I am greatly indebted: in his valuable compilation you will read the transaction at large; and the reflection is very remarkable which the conduct of the king of Dahomey, in this instance, extorted from an historian, who though himself concerned in the Slave Trade, seems not to have lost all sense of its enormity. "The king's actions carry great reputation, for by the destruction of this Trade, he relinquished his own private interests for the sake of publick justice and humanity; and I have a natural propensity to wish the king of Dahomey well, since he has redeemed his countrymen from being sold as Slaves."

But, Sir, the exciting of wars between neighbouring States is almost the lightest of the evils Africa is doomed to suffer from the Slave Trade: it is indeed one of the greatest calamities to which we are liable in this more highly favoured quarter of the world, but it is a LUXURY in Africa. Still more intolerable are those acts of outrage which we are continually stimulating the Kings to commit on their own subjects; these are still less to be guarded against, and the cruelty of them is aggravated by the consideration that they are committed by those who, instead of the despoilers and ravagers, ought to have been the Guardians and Protectors of their people. A Chieftain is in want of European commodities, and being too weak or too timid to attack his neighbours, he sends a party of soldiers by night to one of his own defenceless villages; they set fire to it, they seize the miserable inhabitants as they are escaping from the flames, and hurry with them to the ships of the Christian Traders, who, hovering like vultures over these scenes of carnage, are ever ready for their prey. Innumerable are the instances of this kind to be met with in the course of the evidence. Captain Wilson, a gentleman of unquestionable veracity and honor, saw armed parties going out to scour the country for many successive

* Lord Muncaster.

evenings. You have in the Evidence more detailed stories of this kind, which cannot but affect the hardest heart. We are told perpetually of villages half consumed, and bearing every mark of recent destruction ; and more than one of our witnesses has been himself engaged in one of these very night expeditions above described. Nor do we learn these transactions only from our own witnesses, but they are proved by the testimony of Slave Factors themselves, whose works were written and published long before the present inquiry. But it is not only by the Chieftains that these disorders are committed, (though even from their attacks poverty itself is no security) every one's hand is against his neighbour : whithersoever a man goes, be it to the watering place, or to the field, or wherever else it may be, he is no where safe ; he never can quit his house without fear of being carried off by fraud or force ; and he dreads to come home again, lest, on his return, he should find his hut a heap of ruins, and his family torn away into perpetual exile : Distrust and terror every where prevail, and the whole country is one continued scene of anarchy and desolation.

But there is more yet behind ! It might naturally have been imagined that no means of procuring Slaves would be left unresorted to ; and accordingly the inventive genius of man, strained to the very utmost in this pursuit, has made the administration of justice itself a fertile source of supply to this inhuman traffick. Every crime is punished by Slavery, and false accusations are perpetually brought in order to obtain the price for which the party convicted is to be sold ; sometimes the judges have a considerable part of this very price, and universally fees on every trial. But it is needless to insist on the acts of injustice which must hence arise : if with all that we have done by securing the independence of judges, by the institution of juries, and by all our other legal machinery, we have not done too much to secure the equitable administration of law in this civilized country, what must be the consequence in Africa, where every man is stimulated to bring an action against his neighbour by the hope of obtaining part

of the price for which he will sell, and where he knows the Judge, who is to preside, has himself an interest in the conviction. In corroboration of these reasonings, we have again the testimony of the Historians of Africa ; and we may trace the laws, which were originally mild, gradually growing more and more severe, in proportion to the predominance of the Slave Trade. Mr. Moore, an author of credit, and himself seven years Factor to the African Company, says, " Since this Trade has been used, all punishments are changed " into Slavery ; there being an advantage in such condemnation, they strain the crimes very hard, in order to get the " benefit of selling the criminal. Not only murder, theft, and " adultery are punished by selling the criminal for a Slave, but " every trifling crime is punished in the same manner." This, and many other instances of a similar sort, will be found in the compilation already referred to.

Nor do we leave it to the Natives of this devoted country to commit merely on each other these acts of depredation ! Many are the acts of violence perpetrated immediately by the Europeans themselves. Many, many are the instances of this kind recorded in the course of our voluminous Evidence ; and if there had been any doubt of the existence of such practices, they have been confirmed past a doubt by some late transactions which, much as I wish to avoid detail, I feel it my duty briefly to relate to the Committee ; the rather because they are master-pieces in their kind, and furnish a complete specimen of the various enormities that attend this detested system.

Some Gentlemen will perhaps recollect, that in the year 1789, I stated to the House a curious incident that had passed in the neighbourhood of the River Cameroons, whence the Master of a Liverpool ship, of the name of Bibby, fraudulently carried off thirty-two relations of one of the Chiefs of the country, who had been put on board as pledges for goods. The enormity of the proceeding excited the utmost indignation in the Governor of one of our West India Islands, who complained of the outrage in the strongest terms, and spoke in

in the language of a man who expressed himself the more vehemently from having long smothered his indignation. Scarce had this scene passed at the Cameroons, when another succeeded of a nature still more shocking. Early in the year 1790, the Captain of an English ship, which had long been lying in that River, having already dispatched one cargo of Slaves, by an attendant vessel, to the West Indies, happening one day to send two or three men to get water, a Black Slave, who was along with them, was seized by a native Trader on the ground of the ship's owing him goods to the value of a Slave or two. It cannot be expected that the Captains of Slave Ships will be men of peculiar mildness in resenting injuries: the revenge however of the Captain in this instance was really an effort of genius, and must appear somewhat singular to Gentlemen less acquainted than myself with the habits of the Slave Trade. In the evening he called all the healthy part of his crew on deck, and ordered them to strip and blacken their bodies all over, putting a piece of cloth round their loins, that they might appear like the natives of the country. They shewed some backwardness; but being threatened to be shot through the head if they refused, they reluctantly complied. Thus accoutred, and being armed with musquets and cutlasses, the Captain himself, blackened like the rest, and breathing implacable revenge, led them forth, about midnight, to the execution of his purpose. They soon reached the dwelling of the unfortunate Trader: they fired upon his wretched family; three of his children were killed on the spot; the man and his wife were desperately wounded; the former died as they were dragging him down to the boat, the latter half an hour after she was on board the ship.— The state of society in Africa is such as to produce universal watchfulness; the Trader had no sooner heard the noise of a party of men at his door, than he beat his drum: this, with the report of the musquets, alarmed the neighbourhood, and it was with difficulty the Captain and his party escaped to the ship, several of them being severely wounded, and one afterwards dying of the injury he had received.

I do not know that there is any one part of this whole transaction more curious than what I am next to relate, or that tends to prove more indisputably that such scenes as I have been describing are considered as common ordinary transactions. The Captain does not seem to have expected reprisals ; his trade appears to have suffered no interruption, and he continued there for several weeks after in a state of quiet and composure. But, Sir, Africans are men, and they have the feelings of men. All this while the fire was not extinct, it only flambered, and was soon to break forth. In this part of the story also there is much well worthy of notice. Several weeks afterwards, one of the Chieftains came on board to pay a friendly visit, and borrow some cutlasses and musquets, alleging the natural pretext, that he was going up into the country to make war, in order to get Slaves, and that the Captain should have half of the booty. The request was so reasonable, that it could not be refused ; any lurking suspicion that might have been entertained of his visit's being hostile was done away, and he was readily furnished with what he required : indeed it would have argued the Captain's being very inattentive to the interest of his employers if he had failed to comply with so reasonable, so customary a requisition. Now, Sir, I dare say, whatever credit Gentlemen may be disposed to give me for the ground-work of the story, they conceive these at least are merely my own comments ! But astonishing as it may seem, this is almost in terms the Captain's own account. So dead and callous does this trade render those who are engaged in it to every sentiment of personal danger and personal character ; they have so forgotten the impressions such transactions must once have produced in themselves ; and are so lost to the sense of the feelings they must still excite in others, that the Captain himself, in a Protest he afterwards drew up on account of the loss of the ship, stated, that the Chieftain came on board under pretence of borrowing some arms, as he was going up into the country to trade, and that he furnished him with musquets and cutlasses, *having often lent him arms before.*

He seems not to apprehend it possible that any other blame could attach on him than that of an improvident expenditure of stores, and with all the solicitude of a man intent to preserve his commercial character unimpeached, he is only anxious to exculpate himself from this imputation. Is it possible for any thing to furnish a more striking exemplification of the principles and nature and mode of conducting the Slave Trade ! The Chieftain and his party perceiving the general state of things favourable to their design, (all the healthy part of the crew being absent on shore) and having thus put the Captain off his guard, suddenly seized him, and threw him overboard, haled him into their canoe, and hurried him to land; where a party of the Natives, who had been lying in ambush for the purpose, immediately surprised that part of the crew before spoken of. You doubtless expect to be told that they were all forthwith murdered by these savage Africans : No such thing ; they only desired the Captain to give them an order for goods on the vessel, with which he was obliged to comply. Now then at least you are prepared to hear that they proceeded to satiate their revenge ; and if this might seem something like bad faith, considering the ransom had been paid, the Captain himself had set them the example : for on the night before he had sallied forth in the execution of his bloody enterprise he had drawn the black Chieftain on board by a friendly invitation, and had detained him as a pledge for his own safety. But, Sir, these barbarians are not yet so improved as ourselves in cruelty and treachery : they set the Captain and his men free without injury, and sent them back to tell the world how much they come behind us in fraud, and outdo us in humanity and honour.

There is nothing more striking to my own mind, (I do not know if it may produce the same impression on the Committee) than the way in which this transaction came out. It was indeed on a trial in a British Court of Justice ! But was it a trial for piracy or murder ? — No, Sir : on a mere civil suit, instituted for wages on the part of some of the poor seamen,

who, sick and disabled, as I have before mentioned, having been obliged to quit the ship, because the Natives threatened to set fire to her, and put them to death after they had taken the Captain and healthy part of the crew, were refused by the owners this wretched compensation for all their danger and sufferings. Glad am I to say they obtained a verdict. I beg the Committee will bear in mind the whole of this transaction, which shews (if any thing can shew it) the dreadful nature of the Slave Trade ; its cruelty, its perfidy, its effects in Africa, and on the minds of those who carry it on ; but that to which I particularly wish to point your attention, is the nature of the Chieftain's application, coupled with the Captain's declaration, that he had often given them fire-arms before, whence you may collect, that these ravages are customary things, the regular mode of doing business in the Slave Trade. Remember too, that these transactions were carrying on at the very time our inquiry was going forward, and whilst our Opponent's witnesses were strenuously denying not only the actual, but even the possible, existence of any such depredations.

There is however another instance yet behind, which in some respects surpasses in enormity even that I have just now stated. Gentlemen may perhaps recollect some instances in our Evidence wherein, when the Natives have persisted in asking too much for their Slaves, a Captain has fired on their towns, and used other compulsory means to bring them down to more reasonable terms. If a few lives should be lost in this mode of adjusting the bargain, it does not much signify ; human life is appreciated but at a low rate in Africa.

Now, Sir, it will astonish the House to hear of a recent transaction of this sort, exceeding all former ones in magnitude and enormity. This happened no longer ago than last August, after all our arguments and discussions, when, if ever, you would think the Slave Captains would have been on their good behaviour. Six British ships, three belonging to Liverpool, three to Bristol, were anchored off the Town of Calabar. Gentlemen will recollect the place,—it was the scene of a dreadful massacre about twenty years before. The Captains

of these six vessels thinking the Natives asked too much for their Slaves, and having in vain endeavoured to prevail on them to moderate their conditions, held a consultation how they should proceed, and agreed to fire upon the town, unless their terms should be complied with. They one evening notified their determination, and acquainted the Traders that if they should continue obstinate, they would put it in execution the next morning. *In this instance they kept their word.* They brought 66 guns to bear upon the Town, and fired on it for two or three hours; not a single shot was returned.— A canoe then came off to offer terms of accommodation, stating that much execution had been done, which was indeed the less to be wondered, *because the guns had been pointed by old men-of-war-seamen.* How dishonourable an exercise of their skill! The parties still not agreeing, whilst the poor people, taking advantage of this cessation, were seen on all sides making their escape into the woods, or paddling off in their boats, some one way, some another, the firing recommenced; more damage was done, and the obstinate Natives were at length forced into submission. There are no certain accounts of their loss; report said 50 were killed; but some were afterwards seen in the agonies of death, by those who were afterwards sent on shore to buy Slaves, and others badly wounded: the affair however ended, as it ought, and I have no doubt we may have the satisfaction to think many of the Liverpool and Bristol Owners are some hundred pounds richer for the transaction. One circumstance I must add, which I had before omitted, though for my Country's sake I would gladly suppress it, and I recommend it in particular to the consideration of those who have urged it as an argument for our carrying on the Slave Trade, that it would be taken up by other nations if we were to desist from it: a French ship was at the same time in the Calabar River, the Captain of which could not be prevailed on, by the British Captains, to join in their enterprize. He bought at the high price; and they were obliged to suspend their bloody purpose until he had sailed away with his cargo. Sir, it shocks me more than all

the rest to be obliged to say, that I fear these matters are not altogether unknown at Bristol; and yet I hear these very Captains are furnished with fresh births, as if they had raised their estimation by this instance of their activity. Yes, Sir, at this very moment, whilst we are sitting here, and talking of Abolition, in contempt of our debates, in defiance of our inquiries, nay, as if they thought hereby to recommend themselves to the sanction and countenance of a British House of Commons. —— Excuse my warmth; — it is impossible for any one, who has the feelings of man, not to lose his temper in speaking of such proceedings. The House being here clamorous for the names, Mr. W. stated them: The Thomas, of Bristol, Capt. Phillips; Wasp, of ditto, Capt. Hutchinson; Recovery, of ditto, Capt. Kimber; the Martha, of Liverpool; Captain Houston; the Betsey, of ditto, Capt. Doyle; the Amachree, of ditto, Capt. ——, I am not quite certain of the name, but I believe Captain Lee.

I think, Sir, I have already laid enough to the charge of this detested traffic; yet believe me if I were so disposed, I could add much more of a similar nature; but I will pass it over, just only suggesting one new topic on which I might enlarge, that I mean, of our staining the Commercial Honour of Great Britain, by descending to every petty fraud in our dealings with the Natives.

But not to take up any more of your time on this part of the subject, I must pass on to another, which originally struck my mind as being more horrid than all the rest, and which I think still retains its superiority; I mean the situation of the Slaves on board a ship, or what is commonly called the Middle Passage. I will spare the Committee, however, the detail of all those perfections in cruelty which it exhibits; but two or three instances I must mention, because they are of a recent date, and still more because they will tend to convince those who are inclined rather to regulate than abolish the Slave Trade, that so long as it is suffered to exist, the evils of the Middle Passage must exist also, though in respect of them more than any other class, regulation might have

have been deemed effectual. We were told, I remember, in an early stage of our inquiry, that formerly indeed the Negroes were but ill accommodated during their conveyance, and perhaps there was now and then a considerable mortality; but such had been the improvements of late years, that they were now quite comfortable and happy. Yet it was no longer ago than in the year 1788, that Mr. Isaac Wilson, whose intelligent and candid manner of giving his evidence, could not but impress the Committee with a high opinion of him, was doomed to witness scenes as deeply distressing as almost ever occurred in the annals of the Slave Trade. I will not condemn the Committee to listen to the particulars of his dreadful tale, but for the present will content myself with pointing your attention to the mortality. His ship was a vessel of 370 tons, and she had on board 602 Slaves, a number greater than we at present allow, but rather less I think, than what was asserted by the Slave Merchants to be necessary in order to carry on their trade to any tolerable profit. Out of these 602 she lost 155. I will mention the mortality also of three or four more vessels which were in company with her, and belonged to the same owner. One of them bought 450, and buried 200; another bought 466, and buried 73; another bought 546, and buried 158; besides 155 from his own ship, his number being 602; and from the whole four after the landing of their *Cargoes* there died 220. He fell in with another vessel which lost 362, the number she had bought was not specified: to these actual deaths during and immediately after the voyage, add the subsequent loss in what is called the seasoning, and consider that this loss would be greater than ordinary in *Cargoes* landed in so sickly a state. Why, Sir, were such a mortality general, it would in a few months depopulate the earth. We asked the Surgeon the causes of these excessive losses, particularly on board his own ship, where he had it in his power to ascertain them; the substance of his reply was this:—that most of the Slaves appeared to labour under a fixed dejection and melancholy, interrupted now and then by lamentations and plaintive songs, expressive of their concern for the loss of their relations and

and friends, and native country. So powerfully did this operate, that many attempted various ways of destroying themselves ; some endeavoured to drown themselves, and three actually effected it ; others obstinately refused to take sustenance, and when the whip and other compulsive means were used to compel them to eat, they looked up in the face of the officer who unwillingly executed this painful task, and said in their own language "presently we shall be no more." Their state of mind produced a general languor and debility, which were increased in many instances by an unconquerable abstinence from food, arising partly from sickness, partly, to use the language of Slave Captains, from "sulkiness." These causes naturally produced the flux, the contagion spread, numbers were daily carried off, and the disorder aided by so many powerful auxiliaries resisted all the force of medicine. And it is worth while to remark, that these grievous sufferings appear to have been in no degree owing either to want of care on the part of the owner, or to any negligence or harshness of the Captain. When Mr. Wilson was questioned if the ship was well fitted ; as well, says he, as most vessels are, and the Crew and Slaves as well treated as in most ships ; and he afterwards speaks of his Captain in still stronger terms, as being a man of tenderness and humanity. The ship in which Mr. Claxton the Surgeon failed, since the Regulating Act, afforded a repetition of all the same horrid circumstances I have before alluded to. Suicide, in various ways, was attempted and effected, and the same barbarous expedients were resorted to, in order to compel them to continue an existence too painful to be endured : the mortality also was as great. And yet here also it appears to have been in no degree the fault of the Captain, who is represented as having felt for the Slaves in their wretched situation. If such was the state of things under Captains who had still the feelings of their nature, what must it be under those of a contrary description ? It would be a curious speculation to consider what would be the conduct towards his *Cargo* of such a man as one of the six I lately spoke of ? it would be curious to trace such an one in idea through all the opportunities the Middle Passage would afford

afford him of displaying the predominant features of his character. Unhappily, Sir, it is not left for us here to form our own conjectures ! Of the conduct of one of them at least, I have heard incidents which surpass all my imagination could have conceived. One of them I would relate, if it were not almost too shocking for description ; and yet I feel it my duty, in the situation in which I stand, not to suffer myself to pay too much attention to what has been well called squeamishness on the part of the Committee. If it be too bad for me to recite, or for you to hear, it was not thought too bad for one of those poor creatures to suffer, of whom I have this night the honour to be the Advocate. There was a poor girl on board, about fifteen years of age, who had unfortunately contracted a disorder, which produced effects that rendered her a peculiar object of commiseration. In this situation the poor girl being quite naked, bent down in a sloping posture, wishing out of modesty to conceal her infirmity, the Captain ordered her to walk upright, and when she could not, or would not obey, he hoisted her up, naked as she was, by the wrists, with her feet a little distance from the deck ; and whilst she there hung, a spectacle to the whole crew, he flogged her with a whip with his own hands. He then hung her up in a similar way by both legs, and lastly by one leg ; till at length having thus exhausted the efforts of his savage invention, he released her from her torments. The poor girl never took heart again ; what with the pain, and what with the shame she suffered, she fell into convulsions, and died within three days. The person who related this fact to me is a professional man, who is ready to declare it upon his oath. He has related to me other acts of barbarity, nearly as atrocious ; and you will be little surprised to hear, that the cruelties of this wretch were not confined to Slaves only, but that the Sailors came in for their share. Mr. Wilberforce being called upon for the name of the Captain, said, Captain Kimber is the man who performed these feats, the Commander of one of the six ships in the affair of Calabar.— Think only that these things passed but a few months ago, and

and here too, as I have before had occasion to remark, you will observe that this was at the very moment of our inquiry and discussion ; and yet even then they could not, though but for a short interval, suspend their work of cruelty, but pursued it more daringly and desperately than ever. And so will it ever be whilst you employ such Agents as the Slave Trade either finds or makes : you will in vain endeavour to prevent the effects of those ferocious dispositions which this savage traffick too commonly creates ; till your regulations can counteract the force of habit, and change the nature of the human mind, they will here be of no avail.

Nor, as you must have already collected, can they have all that effect which has sometimes been supposed even in preventing the mortality. I do not, indeed, deny that the Regulating Act has lessened this, but not in the degree in which it is generally imagined ; and even in the last year I know the deaths on shipboard will be found to have been between 10 and 11 per cent. on the whole number that was exported.—In truth, you cannot reach the cause of this mortality by all your Regulations.—Until you can cure a broken heart, until you can legislate for the affections, and bind by your statutes the passions and feelings of the mind, you will in vain sit here devising rules and orders : your labour will be but in vain : you cannot make these poor creatures live against their will : in spite of all you can do they will elude your Regulations ; they will mock your Ordinances ; and triumph, as they *have* done, in *escaping* out of your hands.

O, Sir ! are not these things too bad to be any longer endured ? I cannot but persuade myself that whatever difference of opinion there may have been, we shall this night be at length unanimous. I cannot believe that a British House of Commons will give its sanction to the continuance of this infernal traffick. We were for a while ignorant of its real nature, but it has now been completely developed, and laid open to your view in all its horrors. Never was there indeed a system so big with wickedness and cruelty : to whatever part of it you direct your view, whether to Africa, the

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Middle Passage, or the West Indies, the eye finds no comfort, no satisfaction, no relief. It is the gracious ordination of Providence, both in the natural and moral world, that good should often arise out of evil: hurricanes clear the air, and the propagation of truth is promoted by persecution: pride, vanity, profusion, in their remoter consequences contribute often to the happiness of mankind; in common too what is in itself evil and vicious, is permitted to carry along with it some circumstances of palliation; even those descriptions of men that may seem most noxious have often some virtues belonging to their order; the Arab is hospitable, the robber is brave; we do not necessarily find cruelty associated with fraud, or meanness with injustice. But here the case is far otherwise; it is the prerogative of this detested traffick to separate from evil its concomitant good, and reconcile discordant mischiefs; it robs war of its generosity, it deprives peace of its security; you have the vices of polished society without its knowledge or its comforts; and the evils of barbarism without its simplicity. Nor are its ravages restricted as those of other evils to certain limits either of extent or continuance; in the latter it is constant and uninterrupted, in the former it is universal and indiscriminate. No age, no sex, no rank, no condition, is exempt from the fatal influence of this wide-wasting calamity! Thus it attains to the fullest measure of pure, unmixed, unsophisticated wickedness, and scorning all competition or comparison, it stands without a rival in the secure, undisputed possession of its detestable pre-eminence.

Such being the true character of that abhorred system which I this night call upon you to abolish, it would I think be matter of inexpressible astonishment to any one, who being new to the discussion of this subject, should be told for the first time, that it had been sometimes attempted to be defended on the ground of humanity and benevolence. I do not know that it is necessary to urge any thing in reply to this strange argument, and I doubt whether any man possessed of all the powers of eloquence could make its absurdity appear more strongly than by simply stating it, and

leaving it to itself. To honour it however with somewhat more particular attention than it deserves; it has been said the Slaves we take are captives and convicts, who, if we were not to carry them away, would all be butchered, and many of them sacrificed at the funerals of people of rank, according to the savage custom of Africa. Now, here, I beg it may be observed in the first place, that this argument applies only to the case of those Slaves who are prisoners of war and convicts; and what I have already said must have convinced the Committee, how much of our supply is derived from other sources. And were it even true that you saved all of these two descriptions of people from certain death, these advocates for humanity would not have much on which to congratulate themselves, would they but estimate the total waste of the species which resulted from this exercise of their philanthropy. But this plea, miserable as it would be if it were true, is altogether false and groundless. I could prove it so by a thousand quotations if I were not afraid of trespassing on the patience of the Committee; you have but to glance on the Evidence, and find it acknowledged by our opponents themselves, that the custom of ransoming prisoners of war prevails in Africa; and as for what has been said of human sacrifices, I do not deny that there have been some instances of these, but they have been by no means proved more numerous or frequent than amongst other barbarous nations, and where they exist, being acts of religion in order to quiet the Manes of the deceased Chieftain, they would probably not be waved for the sake of a little commercial advantage. In the very instance of the King of Dahommey, which has been so much insisted on, one of the most intelligent and strenuous of the witnesses against the Abolition, declared he believed that if the convicts should fall short for these sacrifices, the requisite number would be supplied by innocent people who would be seized for that purpose: so that admitting even the truth of your own assertion, you bring away such as have deserved to suffer, in order to leave the innocent to be sacrificed in their stead.

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But if not sacrificed, the slaves, if we were to refuse to buy them, would be destroyed.—To this assertion also we can oppose not only the reason of the thing, but abundant, complete, indisputable testimony: in fact nothing can be more ridiculous than the grounds on which it has been asserted that the refused Slaves are destroyed or sacrificed. I will mention to the Committee a single instance or two as a specimen of the rest; it is to be found in the evidence of Capt. Frazer. I was curious to discover how a person declared to be in general a man of an amiable temper, could reconcile it to his principles and feelings to carry on the Slave Trade: The solution was furnished me when I found that he had imbibed this notion of the unhappy fate of the refused Slaves. Considering that he himself told us of other modes wherein they were disposed of in various places, I thought him a little unreasonable in this opinion: however, he frankly gave us the grounds of it: I must beg the Committee to hear them in his own words:—“ I had a Cabenda boy with me as a linguist, who informed me, one evening, that a Slave, whom I would not purchase, was put to death in the following manner:—the owner of this Slave who came from the inland country, as I was informed, called the traders and fishermen together under a large tree. He told them that the Slave whom the White Man would not buy, had run away from him several times in his own country. He accused him of dishonesty. He declared that by the custom of that country, every man that met a runaway Slave was obliged to bring him back to his master, for which the master was obliged to pay him. He said that this Slave run away three times from him: that he paid more for bringing him back than he was worth: that he derived no benefit from his labour: that he had offered him to a White Man, who refused to purchase him at the price he asked: that he was determined to put him to death to prevent the necessity of paying any more for bringing him back, and as an example to the rest of his Slaves.”

He then recites the particulars of the mode wherin the owner proceeded to the execution of his purpose. But can any thing be more unfair than to urge this as a proof that refused Slaves in general are put to death. It seems almost as if the owner of this boy had been on his guard to prevent the possibility of such a construction: he does not act like a man who thinks he may take away the life of his Slave on the mere impulse of his own caprice, but he is solicitous not to subject himself to such an imputation; he is anxious to justify himself to the surrounding natives, who might otherwise resent his conduct; he accordingly convenes them for that purpose, and explains at large the grounds of his proceeding. Another instance is mentioned by Captain Frazer, wherein a sucking child was about to be put to death, if he had not humanely rescued it by the offer of a jug of brandy. But he has himself furnished you with an explanation of this incident; and on reading a little farther you find that it was the child of a woman who had been purchased the same day by another Captain. Captain Frazer carried the child on board and restored it to its mother, who went on her knees and kissed his feet.

But leaving this topick of the massacre of refused Slaves, it is added by the same votaries of humanity, that the general state of things in Africa is such, that the Slave Tr's cannot render it worse; that it is kindness to the inhabitants of that country to take them out of it. In short, that instead of being the worst enemies as I have stated, we have been in fact the benefactors of the Africans. This is a part of the subject on which very mistaken notions have prevailed, and I beg leave to read certain extracts I have made with relation to it; they are many of them selected from the publication of my noble friend before referred to.

From these it will appear that the state of things in Africa is by no means so barbarous as has been represented, and that the situation of those who are in the condition of Slaves themselves, is in no degree a state of hardship and degradation. "Axim, says Bosman, is cultivated, and abounds

with

with numerous large and beautiful villages ; its inhabitants are industriously employed in trade, fishing, or agriculture ; they export rice to all the Gold Coast"—“ there is a great number of fine populous villages on the River Ancobar”—“ The inhabitants of Adom always expose large quantities of corn, &c. to sale, besides what they want for their own use.” “ The people of Acron seldom or never go to war ; they husband their time and grounds so well that every year produces a plentiful harvest.” Speaking of the Gold Coast, he says, “ their most artful works are the gold and silver bands they make for us, the thread and contexture of which is so fine that I question whether our European artists would not be put to it to imitate them ; and indeed if they could, and were no better paid than the Negroes, they would be obliged to live on dry bread.”—“ The people of Fida are so strongly bent on trade and agriculture, that they never think of war.”—Speaking of the Fetu country, he says, “ frequently when walking through it, I have seen it abound with fine well-built and populous towns, agreeably enriched with vast quantities of corn and cattle, palm wine and oil. The inhabitants all apply themselves without distinction to agriculture : some sow corn, others press oil, and draw wine from the palm trees.”

I will now read from the evidence certain extracts descriptive of the state of Slaves in Africa ; and from these it will appear whether even *their* situation is such a one as to give them much reason to envy the condition of their brethren, who have been carried to the West Indies. “ The Slaves are well fed, their labour is not constant, and there is no driver in Senegal and Gambia.”—“ Domestick Slaves have all the advantages of free men.”—“ Born Slaves cannot be sold but for a crime on trial by their own clan.”—And again, “ domesticks are not sold by their masters but for enormous crimes, and after trial by their own clan.” “ Many slaves in Africa are not easily distinguished from their masters.”—“ Slaves are treated well and familiarly at Angola.”—“ On the continent of Africa Slaves are few in

number,

number, they are treated well, eat with their masters, work along with them, and are well clothed."—" The Slaves of persons in Africa are treated by them as Europeans treat people of their own family ;" and not to multiply extracts unnecessarily, I will only add on this head the declaration of a witness, who informs us, that though " Blacks in Africa have said they were Slaves, he never discovered this from their treatment."

I cannot dismiss this branch of the subject without begging the Committee to attend to some few farther extracts from authors of credit which suggest how far Africa has benefited from her connection with Europeans. They shall be but few, for were I disposed to multiply them, there would be no end of my labour. I will pass over many I had selected for the purpose of stating them to the House, which respect the practices of breaking up villages, and of depredations both of the Whites on the Blacks, and of the Blacks on each other, encouraged and stimulated by the Europeans ; but I must beg leave to read to the Committee a few which speak of the exertions of our active benevolence in inciting them to war, and of the effect of the Slave Trade upon the criminal law and the administration of justice. From these last it will appear how far we can pretend with any decency, that by our humane interference we had rescued their convicts from the barbarous severity of their fanguinary laws, and introduced a milder system of criminal jurisprudence.

Smith, who was sent out by the Royal African Company, in 1726, assures us, that " the discerning natives account it their greatest unhappiness that they were ever visited by the Europeans. They say that we Christians introduced the traffick of Slaves, and that before our coming they lived in peace. But, say they, " it is observable wherever Christianity comes, there come with it a sword, a gun, powder, and ball."

" The Europeans," says Brue, " are far from desiring to act as peace-makers among them. It would be too contrary to their interests ; for the only object of their wars is to carry off Slaves, and as these form the principal part of their traffick,

they

they would be apprehensive of drying up the source of it, were they to encourage the people to live well together."—"The neighbourhood of the Damel and Tin keep them perpetually at war, the benefit of which accrues to the Company, who buy all the prisoners made on either side, and the more there are to sell, the greater is their profit; for the only end of their armaments is to make captives to sell them to the White Traders."

Artus of Dantzick says, that in his time "those liable to pay fines were banished until the fine was paid, when they returned to their houses and possessions."

Bosman affirms, that "the punishment for adultery is by fine; the fine among the common people is 4, 5, or 6 pounds, and among the rich more, perhaps 100l. or 200l. he has heard of fines of 5,000l."—"The punishment for theft on the Gold Coast is by fine."—"The greatest crimes at Whydah are generally compensated by money." Speaking of the Gold Coast, he says, "Nobody is here fined above his ability, unless by an accumulation of crimes he hath given occasion thereto, and then he is sent into Slavery."—At Benin he informs us, that "theft is punished by restitution and fine, and if the thief is poor, after the restitution of the goods, if in his power, he is very well beaten."

Moore, who resided seven years on the Coast, as Factor to the Company, says, "since this Trade has been used, all punishments have been changed into Slavery; there being an advantage in such condemnation, they strain the crimes very hard in order to get the benefit of selling the criminal. Not only murder, theft, and adultery, are punished by selling the criminal for a Slave, but every trifling crime is punished in the same manner."

Atkins, speaking of adultery and theft, says, "Trade has so infected them with covetousness and fraud, that the Chiefs will put snares both for the one and the other, driving at the profit, and not at the punishment of a crime."

Loyer affirms, that "the King of Sain on the least pretence sells his subjects for European goods. He is so tyrannically severe,

severe, that he makes a whole village responsible for the faults of one inhabitant, and on the least offence sells them all for Slaves."

Such, Sir, are the testimonies that have been borne, not by persons whom I have summoned, not by friends to the Abolition, but by men who were, many of them, themselves engaged in the Slave Trade. Many, many more I could add of the same kind, but these are abundantly sufficient to refute the unfounded assertions of these pretended advocates for humanity. But in truth were they even to make good their assertions, they would in my mind little mend their cause: were it ever so true, as it is most false, that you made them happier by taking them away, this would give you no right to take them against their will.

I have sometimes been reproached with my extravagant humanity. But I may now repel the accusation, and for myself declare, as I have said before, that I rest this question not on the ground of humanity, but of religion and justice. It has sometimes also been imputed to me, that I am actuated by a spirit of fanaticism and bigotry; but I beg it may here be observed, that it is on my opponents and not on me that these charges may be fairly urged; their's are the very principles on which have been rested the grossest systems of bigotry and superstition that ever disgraced the annals of mankind. On what other principles was it that Mahomet sent forth his Mussulmen to ravage the world. Was it not these that lighted the fires of the inquisition? Have not both these systems been founded on the notion of your having a right to violate the laws of justice, for the purposes of humanity? Did they not both plead that they were promoting the eternal happiness of mankind; and that their proceedings were therefore to be justified on the dictates of true and enlarged benevolence? But the religion I profess is of another nature; it teaches me first to do justice, and next to love mercy; not that the claims of these two will ever be really found to be jarring and inconsistent: When you obey the laws of God, when you attend

to the claims of justice, you will then also best consult and most advance the happiness of mankind. This is true, this is enlarged benevolence; and of this it may be affirmed in the unparalleled language of a great writer, " that her seat " is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world : " all things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very " least as feeling her care, the greatest as not exempted " from her influence : both angels and men, and every other " creature, though each in different sort and order, yet all " with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their " peace and joy."

I shall next touch for a moment on a ground whereon our opponents, driven as they are from place to place in quest of argument, have often attempted to take their stand ; that I mean of other nations being likely to carry on the Slave Trade if we were to abandon it; on which the conclusion is then rested, that if so, however wicked; however cruel it is, we might as well carry it on ourselves. Admitting the supposition to be just, the inference that is drawn from it was so completely exposed last year by the Right Honourable Gentleman opposite to me, that it can hardly be necessary for me now to say a syllable on the subject. I will therefore only repeat what I have declared on former occasions, that I have no doubt if we were to abolish the Slave Trade, other nations would follow our example.

Nor can any thing be more unreasonable than for Gentlemen to urge against the probability of this event, that the nations in question so far from abolishing, have even lately passed edicts, and granted bounties for the encouragement of the Trade. If for four or five years we have been carrying on a laborious investigation into its nature and circumstances; if after developing its genuine character, and ascertaining its dreadful effects, we still hang back and hesitate, was it fair to expect, as I argued on a former occasion, that the nations in question should relinquish the Trade without inquiry, little acquainted as they must be supposed to be with its accumulated horrors; and even confirmed by our

delay in the idea of their having been exaggerated? And is it just to infer, that they will continue in the commission of these crimes knowingly, because they have hitherto done it ignorantly? In fact, Sir, an incident that has lately happened in a neighbouring kingdom, tends to confirm this very reasoning, and it should encourage the friends of Abolition to find that their generous efforts have already produced some effect. Denmark has consented to abolish the Slave Trade in 10 years. Dreadful indeed is the idea of tolerating for a moment, much more for so long a term, such a system of wickedness; but let it be said in excuse for Denmark, that she knew but little of its enormity in comparison with us, and that she also with somewhat more colour of reasoning, if the argument can in any case be endured, may allege that the number of Slaves she takes off was so small, that her going out of the trade would make no real difference in the number exported from Africa. But can we say this, who carry off almost as many as all the rest of Europe put together? There is in fact no nation in the world by which this argument may not be used with more decency than by ourselves.

But miserable as this pretext is, I am afraid it will be found on a closer inquiry that we have no right to avail ourselves of it: let us ask ourselves honestly, if we act like those who are really influenced by this consideration: if we were sincere in our professions, we should surely labour to convince the nations of Europe of the enormities of the Slave Trade, and strive to prevail on them to desist from it; whereas we do the very reverse, we sanction it by our example, we push it to an unparalleled extent, and furnish them with this very argument, which if they accept, the Slave Trade can never be abolished at all. But there are some persons who adopt a still bolder language, and who declare without reserve, that religion and justice, and humanity command the Abolition of the Slave Trade, but that they must oppose the measure because it is inconsistent with the national interest. I trust and believe no such argument will be used this night; for what is it but to establish a competition between God and Mammon,

and to adjudge the preference to the latter ? what but to dethrone the moral Governor of the world, and to fall down and worship the Idol of Interest ? What a manifesto were this to the surrounding nations ; What a lesson to our own people ! Come then ye Nations of the Earth, and learn a new Code of Morality from the Parliament of Great Britain. We have discarded our old prejudices ; we have discovered that religion and justice, and humanity, are mere rant and rhapsody. Why, Sir, these are principles which Epicurus would have rejected for their impiety, and Machiavel and Borgia would have disclaimed as *too* infamous for avowal, and *too* injurious to the general happiness of mankind. If God in his anger would punish us for this formal renunciation of his authority, what severer vengeance could he inflict than our successful propagation of these accursed maxims ? Consider what effects would follow from their universal prevalence ; what scenes should we soon behold around us ; in publick affairs, breach of faith, and anarchy and bloodshed ; in private life, fraud and distrust, and perfidy, and whatever can degrade the human character, and poison the comforts of social and domestick intercourse. Men must retire to caves and deserts, and withdraw from a world become too bad to be endured.

If it be, however, our formal determination thus to surrender ourselves, without reserve, to the domination of hard, unfeeling avarice, if we do resolve thus to sell ourselves for gain, let it not, at least, be for such a gain as this, so minute, so dubious, which the ablest and best informed men in the kingdom declare to you to be an injurious, rather than a beneficial possession ; let us atchieve some clearly profitable villainy, some master-stroke of wickedness ; we shall then at least be justified on our own principles : but in this instance you incur the utmost guilt in pursuit of the smallest and most questionable profit, and discredit not your hearts only, but your understandings. And if ever there were a season when we should least of all act on this principle, it is the present day of our unexampled prosperity : shall we chuse this very

moment, when we are enjoying so much from the bounty of Providence, for openly trampling its laws under our feet, and pouring contempt on its most authoritative injunctions ! Why, Sir, if there were one of the brute creation, who, being himself pampered to the full, were thus to make his happiness consist in vexing and persecuting those weaker animals whom his strength enabled him to injure with impunity, we should drive it from us as too bad to be domesticated by mankind. Oh Sir ! let us spare a small part of our full cup of happiness, in order to give comfort and joy to thousands upon thousands of our fellow creatures who are now groaning under oppression and wretchedness : nay you are not even called upon in this instance to give up any thing you enjoy ; but here you may do good by wholesale, and at no expence ; you may enrich others and be yourselves no poorer. Surely it is considerations like these, it is the desire of ceasing from the guilt of abusing the bounty of Heaven, and a sense of the obligation they are under to communicate to others the happiness they themselves enjoy, that has caused the people of Great Britain to step forward on this occasion, and express their sense more generally and unequivocally than in any instance wherein they have ever before interfered. I should in vain attempt to express to you the satisfaction with which it has filled my mind, to see so great and glorious a concurrence, to see this great cause triumphing over all lesser distinctions, and substituting cordiality and harmony in the place of distrust and opposition : nor have its effects amongst ourselves been in this respect less distinguished or less honorable ; it has raised the character of Parliament. Whatever may have been thought or said concerning the unrestrained prevalency of our political divisions, it has taught surrounding nations, it has taught our admiring country, that there are subjects still beyond the reach of party, there is a point of elevation where we get above the jarring of the discordant elements that ruffle and agitate the vale below : in our ordinary atmosphere, clouds and vapours obscure the air, and we are the sport of a thousand conflicting winds and adverse currents ; but here, we

we move in a higher region, where all is peace and clear and serene, free from perturbation and discomposure :

As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale and midway leaves the storm ;
Tho' round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

Here then, on this august eminence, let us build the temple of benevolence ; let us lay its foundation deep, in truth and justice, and let the inscription on its gates, be Peace and good Will towards men. Here let us offer the first fruit of our prosperity ; here let us devote ourselves to the service of these wretched men, and go forth burning with a generous ardor to compensate, if possible, for the injuries we have hitherto brought on them : Let us heal the breaches we have made : Let us rejoice in becoming the happy instruments of arresting the progress of rapine desolation, and of introducing into that immense country the blessings of christianity, the comforts of civilized and the sweets of social life. I am persuaded, Sir, there is no man who hears me who would not join with me in hailing the arrival of this happy period ; who does not feel his mind cheered and solaced by the contemplation of these delightful scenes. The first step towards realizing them, must be to agree with me this night in the motion I bring forward.

But it has been sometimes said, these are all idle and illusive expectations ; the Africans are unconquerably savage ; all attempts to civilize them must be in vain. Whatever, I might have thought of the argument itself, I should have given those who urged it, more credit for their sincerity, if I had found them acting like men who were convinced of its truth ; but surely, it argues their distrust of its validity, when you see them not merely abstaining themselves from attempting the civilization of Africa, but, even obstructing and opposing others who are engaged in the prosecution of this benevolent design. It is with shame and humiliation, I remind the Committee of the resistance that was made to an honourable friend of mine, when he brought forward a

measure

measure for establishing one little settlement in Africa, where-in the natives, secure from the ravages of the Slave Trade, might cultivate the ground in peace ; where we might institute a bloodless traffic in the productions of the soil, instead of this wicked commerce in the flesh and blood of our fellow creatures. How was he thwarted in the exercise of his benevolence ? Petitions poured in from the African Traders, the whole state of things was changed, and the natives, who had been before described as being so insuperably indolent, that it was impossible to prevail on them to work, were now stated to be an industrious people, who furnished the African ships with rice and other provisions in great quantities, and at reasonable rates. But, Sir, these inconsistencies and contradictions were not wanted to convince any reasonable man, that there was no foundation for the opinion, that it was impossible to civilize the continent of Africa. After having so long troubled the House, I dare not enter into the wide field ; it would be necessary for us to investigate, in order to the complete discussion of this argument : I may do it hereafter, if it be required of me ; mean while, I will not only remark, that there are no instances of barbarism amongst the Africans, for which we may not find a parallel in the history of our own ancestors. In fact, Sir, this argument when traced to its foundation, will be found to bottom on the opinion, that the Negroes are not of the human species : this is now, I hope and believe, an exploded idea ; but let it never be forgotten, that none was originally contended for with more shameless obstinacy, and I now mention it the rather, because I am persuaded that the Slave Trade can find no other resting place. And, give me leave to say, that the advocates for this inhuman traffic, acted more honestly, and fairly, and openly whilst they took their stand here, than they do now in continuing to contend after they have been forced to abandon the premises. Oh ! Sir, for their own happiness it were to have been wished, that these poor creatures had not been possessed of human feelings ! but they have shewn the contrary, by ten thousand different proofs. They are confessed to be in their

their own country, remarkably hospitable and kind. What do they not feel on being separated from their friends and connections and native country? Witness their arts of suicide on ship board, and that expedient which is provided in the very construction of a Slave ship, to prevent their terminating an existence, become too painful to be endured: Their attachment to their masters, when kindly treated, is acknowledged by our opponents, and a thousand other proofs might be adduced of their possessing all the best feelings of our nature. No, Sir; it is we, that must confess ourselves deficient in tenderness. From these despised beings, whom we would degrade to the level of the brute creation, let us discover what it is to have human feelings; let us learn from them the mystery of compassion, and borrow the sympathies of a nature superior in sensibility to our own.

I must say a word or two concerning the terms of my motion, which differs a little from that of last year. Gentlemen may concur with me in my vote who approve of a bill for deferring the period of Abolition. My conviction of the indispensable necessity of immediately stopping this trade remains however as strong and unshaken as ever; I can admit of no compromise, and will avail myself of any opportunity of at once destroying this system of iniquity. I am sure too, Sir, that the immediate Abolition of the Slave Trade is to be justified on the principles of sound policy. Let it not be thought, Sir, either of my Right Honourable Friend, who sits near me, or of myself, that it was for our own sakes that we went into that minute detail, and those laborious calculations; from a sense of duty we condescended to such ignoble drudgery, but we appealed ourselves to more simple and more exalted principles; where the commands of justice and humanity are so imperious, I know not how to admit of parley or of compromise. Let those who talk of allowing three or four years to the continuance of the Slave Trade, think of the disgraceful scenes that passed last year. For myself, however, I will wash my hands of the

blood

blood that would be spilled in this horrid interval: I will protest against its being granted, as the most flagrant violation of every principle of justice and humanity. I cannot but believe, that the hour is at length come, when we shall put a final period to the existence of this unchristian traffic; but if in this fond expectation, I should be unhappily mistaken, be assured, Sir, I never will desert the cause, but to the last moment of my life, I will exert my utmost powers in the service of that unhappy country. In truth, if I were not to persevere. I must be dead to every generous emotion that can actuate, and stimulate the mind of man. Can a noble object interest? or the consciousness of an honourable office? What object so noble as this of relieving the miseries of thousands upon thousands of our fellow creatures; introducing christianity and civilization to a fourth part of the habitable globe. I am, indeed, conscious of the honourable nature of the office I have undertaken, and grateful to God for having permitted me to take the lead in the communication of such extended blessings. My task is one in which it is impossible to tire; my work repays itself, it fills my mind with complacency and peace. I lie down with it at night with composure, and rise to it in the morning with alacrity. If it obliges me to be conversant with scenes of wretchedness, this is but like visiting an hospital from motives of humanity, where your own feelings repay you for the pain you undergo. No Sir, no; I never will desist from this blessed work; but I cannot help persuading myself, that there will be no call for my perseverance; I will not allow myself to doubt about the issue, and cheerfully wait the event of your decision.

Mr. Wilberforce then moved.

“ That it is the opinion of this Committee, that the trade carried on by British subjects, for the purpose of obtaining Slaves on the coast of Africa, ought to be abolished.”

W^ere this motion carried, Mr. Wilberforce gave notice that he intended to follow it up by another.

“ That the Chairman be directed to move the House for leave to bring in a bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.”

MR. BAILIE

MR. BAILLIE. It is upon the certainty of meeting with every species of indulgence that is usually granted, by this Honourable House, to all its new Members, that I muster confidence sufficient to offer my humble opinion upon the present question; a question, Sir, of the greatest importance that ever came before Parliament, novel and speculative in its nature, and supported by some of the greatest orators who have ever appeared within the walls of this House: there is no man living entertains a more indifferent opinion of his own abilities than I do; and I feel most sensibly, and with great mortification, the insufficiency of my powers, when brought into comparison with the brilliant parts of the Honourable Gentlemen with whom I have to contend. However, Sir, being very particularly situated as Agent to one of the most valuable of our islands, having passed the most active part of my life in the West Indies, having in the British West-India Islands a considerable property, both in land and Negroes, and being at the same time as much interested in the general welfare and prosperity of the trade, the manufactures, and the navigation of Great Britain, as any Gentleman in the present Parliament, I flatter myself that this Honourable House will not consider my interference as improper; especially, Sir, when I can assure the Honourable Committee, that I consider the present Question as involving in its consequences a considerable proportion of the trade and navigation of Great Britain, and the very existence of those valuable West India Colonies, which have been established by this country for upwards of a century, nourished, cherished, and supported, under various Acts of Parliament, and at the expence of a very serious and weighty outlay of money. I will not, Sir, at this early stage of my argument, make any observations upon the description of people who have so very eagerly, and with so much zeal and industry, propagated and brought forward this unfortunate and impolitic Question, I will content myself by observing, that they have very artfully placed the management of the business in the hands of an Honourable Gentleman, respectable in his character, and amiable in his manners, and for whose private virtues no man entertains a greater value than I do: this Gentleman, Sir, is the known

and avowed and friend and favourite of the Right Honourable Gentleman who so very ably, and so worthily presides at the head of the Administration of this country. His arguments, upon a former occasion, operated upon the Minister's mind, and at the same time extended their effects to the mind of the Right Honourable Gentleman who makes so very conspicuous a figure upon the opposite side of the House ; there is neither in or out of Parliament, Sir, a man who is a greater admirer of the incomparable and brilliant abilities of these Right Honourable Gentlemen, than I am ; I consider them, Sir, an ornament to this House, and an ornament to ther country ; but however I may be disposed to bow, with all due submission, to their opinions upon other occasions, yet upon the present question I differ with them most essentially ; I mean, Sir, I differ with the opinions they gave upon the former investigation of the question ; for, from the circumstances that have occurred in the History of the Western World, since the close of the last Session of Parliament, I flatter myself that they are now made fully sensible of the evil and dangerous tendency of the measure. However, Sir, to come to the Right Honourable Gentleman in a Ministerial capacity, I do maintain, without meaning any personal offence whatever, that the part they acted, upon the Question's being debated in Parliament last year, was unexpected, very unbecoming their high characters, and not at all consistent with the principles upon which, in my humble opinion, great Statesmen ought to act.

I conceive it, Sir, to be the indispensable duty of men in high situations, and who are, or may be, intrusted with the lead of public affairs, to consider the general interest of the State, and of individuals, with a most scrupulous and attentive eye, and to see that the good policy of the country, and the good understanding that has long subsisted betwixt Government and our subjects in our distant colonies, under the sanction and protection of various Acts of the Parliament of Great Britain, should not be broken in upon by such a wild, such an impracticable, and such a visionary scheme, as the present question for abolishing the African Slave-Trade. I flatter myself, Mr. Chairman, that the friends and promoters of the Abolition would have contented themselves with the mischiefs that had already arisen, in consequence

consequence of the agitation of that unfortunate measure, and that the sanguinary dispositions of a certain description of people, would have been fully satiated with the innocent blood that has already been spilt ; but, alas ! Sir, that is not likely to be the case, many of them have been known and heard to exult at the calamities we daily read of, so that in all probability, the mischief is only done in part, and it requires the total desolation and destruction of the West-India colonies of Great Britain to compleat the melancholy scene. I have in my hand, Mr. Chairman, a small pamphlet, printed and published by order of the West-India Planters and Merchants, for the use and information of the Members of both Houses of Parliament ; it contains, Sir, the speech of the Deputies of St. Domingo to the National Assembly of France, and also the speech of M. Bostrand, the late Minister of the Marine Colonies, to the said Assembly, upon the insurrection of the Negroes in that island : If, Sir, the destruction of the most extensive and most valuable colony in the world, the massacre of its inhabitants, the ravishing of the most beautiful part of the creation in a manner hitherto unknown and unheard of, and the unnatural murder of fathers, by the hands of their own children, are sufficient to operate upon the feelings of humanity, there is not, Sir, I am persuaded, a Gentleman in this House, who can withstand the shock ; but to me, who have a personal knowledge of the theatre of these dreadful scenes, and who (though an Englishman, and at St. Domingo in the very glorious and successful war that was carried on, under the auspices of that great and immortal Statesman Lord Chatham) received distinguished marks of kindness and hospitality from many of those families, who by the late melancholy events have been transmitted to oblivion, they are doubly afflicting ; and when I bring to my recollection, Sir, that the causes of all these calamities have originated in Great Britain, I am overwhelmed with sorrow. The island of St. Domingo, Mr. Chairman, is as large as the kingdom of England. In the year 1789, the imports into the colony from France, exceeded three millions sterling, exclusive of near thirty thousand Negroes, which at a very moderate valuation, may be estimated at two millions sterling more ; the exports from the colony, in the same year, amounted in va-

lue to six millions sterl^{ing}, and their trade gave employment to three hundred thousand tons of shipping, and thirty thousand seamen. These circumstances, Sir, I take the liberty of mentioning to the Honourable House, as a confirmation of the testimony I gave before the Committee of the House of Commons, when sitting on the Slave-Trade in the year 1790. In my evidence on that occasion, I believe, Sir, I gave it as my opinion, that the African and West-India trade of France generally employed betwixt forty and fifty thousand seamen; and when it comes to be considered, that the produce of St. Domingo is hardly equal to two-thirds of the whole produce of the French West-India Colonies, I flatter myself it will be admitted, that I have not exceeded in my calculation.

Having said so much, Mr. Chairman, by way of introduction, to what I have to offer upon the question before the Honourable House, I must now beg leave to make some observations upon the speech of the Honourable Gentleman who brought it forward, which I will endeavour to do, in as concise a manner as possible.

I will afterwards take the liberty of calling the attention of the Honourable Committee, to the value and importance of the West-India and African Trade to Great-Britain; to some of the authorities under which the West-India Colonies and African Trade were abolished; to their dependence on each other, and to the injustice and impolicy of the present attempt to abolish the African Slave Trade. The Honourable Gentleman who brought forward this question, has made use of nearly the same arguments, on the present occasion, as he did upon the discussion of the subject last year. And though it may be considered tedious, and even insulting in me, to go into the particulars of a mass of evidence, which I take it for granted every individual Member of this Honourable House is perfect master of, yet it is incumbent on me, speaking generally on the subject, to take notice of the very partial manner in which the Honourable Gentleman and his friends have garbled, from the whole body, such particular parts of the evidence, as were suited to answer their own purposes; and with what an indecent indifference they have treated the testimony of the several

great

great and respectable characters who voluntarily came forward, on our part, to remove that load of calumny and abuse, which has so illiberally and so wantonly been thrown out against every person connected with the West-Indies. I am very far from denying, Mr. Chairman, that many acts of inhumanity have been committed in the transportation of Slaves from the Coast of Africa to the West-Indies, and in the treatment of those Negroes after they had been landed on our islands ; but, as I believe, Sir, that the failings and frailties of human nature prevail generally, in pretty much the same proportion, all over the world, I mean among civilized nations, it would be very unreasonable to expect, among the class of people concerned in the African Trade, or among the inhabitants of the British West-India Islands, a degree of perfection in *morals*, that is not to be found in Great-Britain itself. Will any man estimate the character of the English nation, by what is to be read in the records of the Old Bailey ; or, will any of the most sanguine friends of the Abolition, pretend to say, that there have not been committed, in this great and opulent city in which we live, acts of as shocking, as base, and as barbarous a nature, as any contained in the great mass of evidence, now lying on your Table ? I have lived, Sir, sixteen years of my life in the West-Indies, and notwithstanding what has been said to the contrary, I do declare, in the most solemn manner, that I consider the Negroes in the British West-India Islands, to be in as comfortable a state, as the lower orders of mankind in any country in Europe.

Before the agitation of this unfortunate and impolitic question, their minds were at ease, and they were perfectly contented with their situation ; and the confidence betwixt them and their masters was so unbounded, that except in the stores where sugar, rum, provisions, and cloathing were generally lodged, no locks were ever used. This, Sir, I can assure the Hon. Committee, was the general disposition of the Negroes, in the British West India Islands in the year 1776, when I returned to Europe, and they continued in that happy state until the enemies of the Colonies came forward, and propagated, with so much zeal and industry, the principles of their pernicious doctrines.

doctrines. But, Sir, I am sorry to say, it is very far from being the case at present : the West India Islands are filled with Emissaries, and publications of the friends of Abolition. An universal want of confidence now prevails, and instead of being in that happy state, in which I have represented them, every countenance carries the appearance of anxiety and care, and there is not an estate without a depot for arms, lodged there for the very purpose of destroying those, whose lives it is our wish to preserve upon every principle of humanity and interest. Some gentlemen may probably consider these precautions as consistent with the general system of oppression with which we are charged ; but to me, who have been in situations of danger, and know something of the feelings of men, upon such occasions, I can assure the Honourable Gentlemen, that self preservation foregoes all other considerations. Having said so much, Mr. Chairman, of the civil state of the Negroes in our Islands, I must now, with the permission of the Honourable House, speak to their religious state, beginning with the Island of Grenada, where my property chiefly lies. The Island, Sir, was ceded to Great Britain, at the peace of 1763. Upon our taking possession of it, the Negroes were found baptized, and instructed in such of the principles of the Roman Catholic faith, as were suited to their humble capacities. That religion now universally prevails, for as new Negroes were imported from Africa, they naturally adopted the religious principles of those they found upon the Island, and the Priests, who are always extremely industrious in their vocations, never failed of giving them the necessary instructions ; so that in the course of twelve months, they generally entertained very tolerable ideas of religious duties. There being no Protestant Clergy-men at that time in the Colony, the Gentlemen of the Island gave every possible encouragement to the religious pursuits of their Negroes ; one-half of the number on each estate were permitted to go every Sunday to public Mass, and the mornings and evenings of the Sabbath were dedicated to religious worship on the Plantations, where the whole Gang, *as it is called*, assembled at the dwelling-house or mansion, and went through the service of the Church of Rome, under the immediate eye

of the Master or Manager, in a manner, and with a fervency, that would have done credit to more civilized societies: and as I am one of those who firmly believe that a remnant of all will be saved, I can assure the Honourable Committee, that I have experienced on these occasions such feelings and reflections, as would not have dishonoured the most pure and pious mind.

As to the religious state of the Negroes in the islands where the Roman Catholic faith does not prevail, I am extremely sorry to observe, that I cannot say so much for it. The Moravian Missionaries have of late made great progress in opening the minds of the Negroes, in our old islands, to a sense of religious duties; but there is among the Clergy of our established Church a degree of inattention and indolence that is very much to be lamented, and which is very unpardonable on their part, considering the ample provision that is made for them by the Legislatures of our several Colonies. The pious and respectable character who at present so worthily fills the see of London, is, by what I am informed, extremely attentive to the morals and characters of such men as are admitted into holy orders, for the purpose of occupying the livings in the West India Island, and I am perfectly convinced that all possible means would be made use of by that most excellent Prelate, to extend the blessings of the Gospel to the minds of the Negroes on all our Plantations. The Honourable Gentleman who brought forward this question, and his friends, have, on the present and former occasions, dwelt very much upon the severity of the punishments that are usually administered to our Negroes in the West India Islands. I admit, Mr. Chairman, that instances of inhumanity, and even cruelty, may be produced; but I deny most positively, that the principle or practice is general, and I wish to be permitted to ask such of the Members of this Honourable House, as have had the honour of serving in his Majesty's navy and army, if it is possible or practicable to maintain that order and subordination that is absolutely necessary among bodies of men, without the fear of punishment: I say, Sir, that it is not possible; and as punishments always fall on delinquents, of which there are a certain number in every society, I do maintain, that in every ship's crew and regiment, there is as great

great a proportion of people who come within that description, as in any Gang of Negroes in the West Indies, be they ever so indifferently disposed? That being admitted, Sir, I will be glad to ask, if ever there are punishments inflicted on our seamen and soldiers? Have we ever heard, Sir, of seamen being flogged from ship to ship, or of soldiers dying in the very act of punishment, under the lash of the drummer, when tied up to the halberts, and exposed in as shameful and ignominious a manner as possibly can be conceived? And have we not also heard, Sir, even in this country of boasted liberty, of seamen's being kidnapped and carried away, when returning from distant voyages, after an absence of many years, and that even without being allowed the comfort of seeing their wives and families? I am extremely sorry, Sir, to be under the necessity of having recourse to these circumstances, but I am pressed to it by the very illiberal manner in which our opponents have brought forward every circumstance that applies to Africa and to the West Indies. With regard, Sir, to objects of misery and compassion, they are much more frequent to be met with in Europe than in America. And I declare, without hesitation, and upon the best grounds of personal knowledge and information, that there is more wretchedness and poverty in the parish of St. Giles's, in which I live, than there is in the whole of the extensive Colonies that now are, and formerly were, under the dominion of Great Britain, taking them from Barbadoes to Jamaica, round by the Floridas, and from thence to the island of Newfoundland.

I hope the Honourable Committee will have the goodness to excuse me for dwelling so long upon this part of my argument, and for requesting their particular attention to the very unhandsome and illiberal manner in which the Honourable Gentleman, who takes the lead in this business, and some of his friends, had treated the characters of many of the witnesses who were examined before the Committee of the House of Commons. I am very far, Sir, from being disposed to make general reflections upon any body or set of men, in the manner that has been adopted by these Honourable Gentlemen, nor will I go into the particulars of the evidence, taking it for granted, that the unprejudiced part of this Honourable House will consider the individuals that had been brought forward on

the part of the African Merchants, to be full as respectable, as unbiased, and as independent in their characters and situations, as those who have appeared on the other side. As to what regards that part of the evidence that applies to the West Indies, I am of a very different opinion indeed; I admit, Sir, that there were produced by our opponents, some persons, to whose testimony, *a certain portion of credit ought to be given*; but they were few in number, and therefore I will venture to say, that their general body of witnesses was composed of ill-informed, ignorant, and low men; many of them picked up in the streets of Liverpool and Bristol, where they were starving for want of bread, having neither ability nor reputation to get into any employment, and hired by the Emissaries and Agents of the Society in the Old Jewry, for the very purpose of giving such testimony, as would mislead the minds of the public, who had already been wrought up to an extraordinary state of belief, by the publication of the most incredible chain of incidents, that ever appeared in print. Have we never heard, Sir, of the names of Rodney, Barrington, Hotham, Macartney, Vaughan, or Campbell, and the many other great and respectable characters, who were examined before the Committee of the House of Commons, and gave ample testimony to the comfortable situation of the Negroes in the West-Indies? Is the evidence of those Gentlemen (to make use of the phrase of an Honourable Member of this House) *to be set at nought*, and are we not to give full credit and belief to the words of men, to whom their country, in a great measure, owes the importance and weight she at present possesses among the natives of Europe? For my part, Sir, I was filled with indignation at the very idea of drawing the opinions of such illustrious characters, into comparison with the evidence of those on the opposite side, upon the discussion of the subject last year, and I lamented exceedingly, that I was not then in a situation to give my sentiments upon it.

I come now, Mr. Chairman, to speak of the value and importance of the West-Indian and African Trades to Great Britain. It is not my intention, Sir, to take up the time of the Committee, with an account of the revenue arising to govern-

ment from the importation of the product of our West-India Islands, as probably I may be told by some of the politicians of the present day, that a similar importation from Ostend or Havre, would in that respect be attended with the same advantages to Great Britain; I will therefore, Sir, confine myself to our Trade and Navigation to the colonies and to Africa, and will be glad to ask such Gentlemen, as are pleased to pay proper attention to the subject, if the exporter to, and the importer from, the British West-India Islands and Africa, amounting in the whole to upwards of ten millions sterling annually, the giving employment to 300,000 tons of shipping, and about 25,000 seamen, are not objects of the utmost importance to Great Britain? The Gentlemen who had acted so very hostile a part to the interest of the Colonies, may now, as on a former occasion, consider these objects greatly over-rated, but as I deal in matters of fact, and *in facts only*, I will be bound to make what I advance appear well founded, and to the entire satisfaction of this Honourable House, when, and in whatever manner, they are pleased to order me.

Having mentioned, Mr. Chairman, in as concise and intelligible a manner as I am master of, the value and importance of our West-Indian and African Trade, I am now to speak of some of the authorities, upon which our claims are founded, of the dependence of the Colonies upon the African Trade, and of the injustice and impolicy of the present question; although it is, Sir, too much the fashion of the present times, to prefer the opinions of retired and speculative philosophers, to the wise colonial system, that has been established by our forefathers, and by which this country and the Colonies have thriven; yet I am convinced, that the present Parliament are too much awake to the zeal and true interests of Great-Britain, not to pay proper attention to the encouragement and protection that has been given to the West-India Colonies, and to the African Trade, since their first establishment. It would take up too much of the time of this Honourable House to go fully into the authority; I will therefore confine myself to a few, and being very much unaccustomed to speaking in public, I must crave the permission of the Honourable Committee, to call in the aid of written in-

formation, and to request of the Clerk to read occasionally, such parts of the several Acts and Resolutions, as apply most immediately to the subject of debate. The acts and declarations of the British Legislature, that are most material to the question before the Honourable House, may very properly be classed under these different heads, viz.

1st. Such as declare the said Colonies, and the Trade thereof, advantageous to Great-Britain, and therefore entitled to her protection and encouragement.

2dly. Such as authorize, protect, and encourage, the Trade to Africa, as advantageous in itself, and necessary to the welfare and existence of the said Sugar Colonies.

3dly. Such as promote and secure loans of money to the Proprietors, at the said Colonies, either from British subjects or from Foreigners.

The several Acts are as follow, viz.

In the First Class, are the following, viz.

15 Car. II. cap. 7. 22 & 23 Car. II. cap. 26. 7 & 8 W^r 3. cap. 22. 9 & 10 W. III. cap. 23. 3 & 4 Ann. 6 Ann. cap. 30. 6 Geo. II. cap. 13. 12 Geo. II. cap. 30. 27 Geo. III. cap. 27.

In the Second Class are the following, viz.

1652 Cha. II. 1672 cap. 2. 9 & 10 Will. and Mary, cap. 26. 5 Geo. III. cap. 44. 23 Geo. III. cap. 65. 27 Geo. III. cap. 27.

In the Third Class are the following, viz.

5 Geo. II. cap. 7. 13 Geo. III. cap. 14. 14 Geo. III. cap. 79.

If there is, Mr. Chairman, any dependence whatever to be placed upon the Acts of the British Legislature, the few authorities I have quoted, will, I am persuaded, operate upon the minds of the unprejudiced Members of this Honourable House, and of the community at large, in so forcible a manner, as to afford every reasonable hope for the most perfect security to our

properties. They appear to me, Sir, unanswerable, and even to preclude the necessity of using any farther argument upon the subject; but as we have experienced a want of candour on the part of our opponents, that could hardly have been expected, I must once more trespass on the goodness of the Honourable Committee, by requesting their attention to the encouragement and protection that have been given to the West-India Colonies, and to the African Trade, from the reign of Charles II. down to the present times, and especially during the reign of Queen Anne.

That reign, Mr. Chairman, which may very well be called the Augustan age of Great Britain, was distinguished by the appearance of the most enlightened characters in all departments, that ever any country produced; many of them remarkable for their piety and learning, and whose writings will live for ages, after the wretched productions of the miserable schismatics of the present day are buried in oblivion. Yet, Sir, we do not find in the Parliamentary History of those days, or in any other writings that we know of, the least tendency to such wild and destructive doctrines as the present. No, Mr. Chairman, they were reserved for this age of novelty and innovation; and from the temper and disposition of a certain description of people; which are amply manifested by the publications of the most inflammatory and dangerous tendency with which our daily papers are crowded, I am perfectly satisfied that the question before this Honourable House, is only an introduction to greater evils. The West Indies, Sir, is the most vulnerable part of our dominions, and being at a distance, and having no interest in Parliament, is of course the most likely to become an easy object of prey to artful and designing men. However, Mr. Chairman, our brethren in those Islands being the sons of Britons, and their forefathers having carried across the Atlantic Ocean all the rights and privileges that pertain to British subjects, you may rest perfectly satisfied that they will not tamely submit to being robbed of every thing that is near and dear to them. The abolishing the African Slave Trade, will be an absolute breach of the compact that ties the colonies to the mother country, and being founded on injustice, and contrary

to the spirit and meaning of the laws of England, will meet with universal resistance. I am, Sir, perfectly well acquainted with the temper and dispositions of the inhabitants of our West India Islands ; they possess abilities, having in general received the best education this country affords, and having a lively and just sense of their own rights and privileges. I consider it my duty, as a most hearty well-wisher to the true interests of this country and its colonies, to inform this Honourable House, that it is not in the power of Great Britain to prevent the introduction of Negroes into the British West India Islands.

A serious attention to the several Acts I have mentioned, and to the many other authorities with which our books are filled, must fully convince every unprejudiced Member of this Honourable House, and the community at large, that the laws in existence have given as perfect security to the lives and fortunes of his Majesty's subjects in the West India Islands, as they do to his subjects in Great Britain, and that their property cannot be meddled with or diminished in any shape whatever, without full and ample compensation. If Great Britain, Sir, is in a situation to purchase the fee simple of the property in all our Islands, I, for one, have no manner of objection to the making of a bargain ; but, Sir, how is the value to be estimated ? Why, by a Jury of the vicinity, agreeable to the principles of the laws of England and of the Colonies ; for I can assure the Honourable Committee, that we are not at all in a disposition to have that material point ascertained by the discretionary opinions of the Honourable Gentleman's friends in the Old Jewry. However, Sir, to speak more seriously upon the subject, have not this Honourable House before them full and satisfactory information of every circumstance with regard to our West India Colonies ? Do not the Report of the Committee of Privy Council, and that immense body of evidence that was taken before a Committee of this Honourable House, and which now lie on your table, tell you most positively, that our present stock of Negroes cannot be kept up without an importation from Africa, and that if the African Trade is abolished, there is an end of every species of improvement in all our Islands ? How are the proprietors of lands in the ceded

Islands,

lands, which were purchased of Government under specific conditions of settlement, to be indemnified? and what is to become of an Honourable Friend of mine, now a Member of this Honourable House, and sitting near me, who with another Gentleman and myself, purchased the lands that were granted by the Crown to General Monckton, in the Island of St. Vincent, in the year 1773 or 1774, in consequence of the Address of the House of Commons of that day to his Majesty, and as a reward for that gallant General's military services? The American war, which immediately succeeded our purchase, prevented our making any progress in the sale of these lands until the year 1784. Our sales then commenced, and went on briskly until the year 1788, when it was first known that a plan was in agitation for abolishing the African Slave Trade. Since that period, Sir, we have done little or nothing, and we have 1500 acres of the land on hand, which will be of no value whatever, if the present question is carried.

Will any Gentleman, either in or out of Parliament, pretend to say, that we have not a just and equitable claim, upon the Government of this country, for full and ample compensation? However, Sir, waving for a moment the unfashionable doctrine of colonial rights, how can compensation be made to the many thousand manufacturers, who at present find employment in providing the numberless articles, that are daily wanted for the use and consumption of the West-India Islands, and who must sooner or later experience the distress and inconveniences that must attend the present phrenzy, if the colonies are suffered to go to ruin. Is there a shoe, is there a stocking, is there a hat, or is there a yard of cloth of any kind, used by the Inhabitants of our Islands, that are not manufactured in Great Britain? Nay the very implements of husbandry, and provisions and luxuries that are necessary for the consumption of our tables, go from this country, and that at a considerable expence of fresh commissions and insurance, every shilling of which centers in Great Britain. Is not the whole surplus revenue of our estates spent here, and are not our children educated in this country, and instructed in those principles of affection and loyalty, that have ever made them consider Great Britain as their

their home? And let me, Sir, be permitted to ask the most inveterate of our foes, if we ever have, by any act of sedition or rebellion, forfeited in the smallest degree the countenance and protection, which as sons of Britain, and subjects of the same good and gracious Sovereign, we are most unquestionably intitled to. I maintain, Sir, that we have not, and therefore as a Colonist and in the name of the British West-India Colonies, I demand of the Parliament of Great Britain, that support and protection, which, upon the principles of good policy and faith, they are in duty bound to afford us, in common with the rest of his Majesty's loyal subjects. There is still, Mr. Chairman, a consideration attending the question now before this Honourable House, of full as much importance as any I have mentioned, and that is the fatal effects a diminution of our trade would have upon the navigation of Great Britain. Does it not appear, Sir, by the evidence now lying on our table, that the West-India trade is considered a most excellent nursery for seamen, and that in all the wars we have of late been engaged in, have been found to be the most active, and useful body of men, in his Majesty's navy? For my part, Sir, considering the navy as our best and most natural defence, I am one of those who think, that seamen ought to be made, by all possible means, and upon that principle, Sir, I contend that the trade to Africa should meet with every encouragement that this country can give it. Indeed I am so great an enthusiast for the increase of our navigation and seamen, that while I have the honour of being a Member of this House I never will give my consent to any measure, be it what it will, that can possibly tend to the lessening of our number of seamen *one man*, no Sir, *not one man*; and this I hold to be sound constitutional doctrine, and those who are of a different opinion, I will ever consider as ignorant of the true interests of Great Britain, and enemies to its welfare and prosperity.

Mr. VAUGHAN. I rise, Mr. Chairman, for the first time of speaking in this House, to remove some prejudices respecting the Colonies, the conduct and circumstances of which have been involved in the question relative to the Slave Trade, and complicated with it by the Honourable Gentleman, who has brought forward the question, and by others. The treatment of Negroes in the West Indies, has been stated as an objection to send any more to those islands. It becomes therefore necessary to endeavour to remove the prejudices that prevail, and as I am a West Indian by birth, and am connected with the islands by profession and private fortune, having property in the West Indies, I can speak from my own testimony, and from the evidence of my own senses, but I shall not be long upon the subject, though it is my intention to take rather a wide view of it. With respect to my being a Merchant, it is my pride. I prefer independence to every other condition, and though I may have profited by the friendship of persons of considerable rank in this country, I choose to be the architect of my own fortune. In the early part of my life, I own, no man was more strongly in favour of the Abolition of the Slave Trade than I was. I was educated by a Gentleman well known in the world of letters, by Dr. Priestley, and by the father of Mrs. Barbauld, who were both of them intimately acquainted with the West India History, and friends to the idea of Abolition. Their sentiments I had imbibed, but although bred at the feet of Gamaliel, having resolved to judge for myself, I left England, and went to Jamaica. There I soon found my notions shaken, and my systems embarrassed. A state of civilization creates wants of the mind merely, whereas a state of slavery regards only those of the body. The Slaves, therefore, would not exert themselves easily for hire, and I found the Negroes by no means in a condition fit to receive civilization. Next to my father's estate were several Maroon Negroes, a people who refuse to do any work whatever, but throw all the labour on their wives. The whites also, I soon saw, could not replace the Negroes in the field; a fact which the Sierra Leona Company have themselves acknowledged, in opposition to the assertion of Mr. Ramsay. In confirmation of this remark, I beg

leave

leave to read from the Report of the Sierra Leone Company the following quotation, viz. "The impossibility of finding any Europeans who can work in Africa in the sun, without the utmost prejudice to their health, has made the Directors conceive it to be their duty to discourage labourers from hence, who would go out with this view." I found the situation of the Negroes in the West Indies much better than I could have imagined. The poor in all countries are hardly used, and the Negroes cannot be supposed to be in an elevated situation; but excepting with respect to their liberty, I will venture to say, they are in plight and necessaries as well off as the poor in this and such other countries in Europe as I have seen. They have little want of clothes or fuel, from the warmth of the climate; they have a house and land *gratis*; no such thing as imprisonment for debt exists there, and they are not deterred from marrying through fear of not being able to support a family; their orphans and widows are always taken care of, as they themselves are when old, or when they meet with accidents. Physic, surgery, midwifery, and attendance, are furnished *gratis*, so that no poor laws were requisite for their support. They have their private property, which no master ever takes from them; and were perfectly resigned at the time I was abroad, to their situation, and looked for nothing beyond it. An anecdote that came to my knowledge, will serve to evince their resignation: a slave being idle, was reproved by his overseer, who said, "For what purpose do you think your master purchased you, but to work for him?" The question was unanswerable, and the slave was silent, and immediately began to work. Negroes form the labouring poor of the islands; and with respect to necessaries, they appear as happy as any other poor, have as many amusements of their own, and as much cheerfulness. Perhaps persons were prejudiced by living in towns to which Negroes were often sent for punishment, and where there were many small proprietors, or by seeing no Negro otherwise than as one of the labouring poor. It is cruel to say, as Mr. Ramsay has done, that they have only four or five hours to themselves in the four and twenty; for this is not enough for sleep, much less for their night rambles; and it has been stated that they went

about in the course of the night to a considerable distance. On the whole, they only want liberty, and only occasionally suffer cruelties. As to Africa, there seems to be no way at present of preventing her supplying fresh slaves, so that I see no means of correcting what is wrong even in the importation of slaves, unless from a change in the spirit of the times; not being a Minister, and not having possession of an Alexander's sword to cut the Gordian knot by force, in the face of Acts of Parliament, and without providing indemnity to the concerned. Thus I felt and reasoned, when in the islands. I cannot omit to notice a set of prejudices respecting the Colonies. As, first, that it is nothing but cruelty which occasioned the inequality of deaths and births. Is it cruelty that occasions the superiority of deaths to births in the great city of London; or in particular classes of people in all places, as domestic servants, soldiers, &c.? It is owing to celibacy or disease, according to the case. Among the Negroes, it is owing to the plan formerly prevailing, of having more males than females imported, and to the dissoluteness of these people, as well as to the diseases peculiar to themselves, especially among the children, whose frequent deaths, on a particular date from their birth, and their doing well in general, if they survive that date, cannot be owing to cruelty. The two opinions appear to be contradictory, that the Negroes are wasting from cruelty, and yet that they increase so as to make farther importation superfluous. With regard to population, even in those islands which nearly keep up their numbers by procreation, there is a difficulty, which is, that the circumstance may be owing to the increase on one estate, compensating for losses upon another. But it should be considered, that these estates will not interchange their numbers. Whereas, where labourers are freemen, they circulate from one employer to another, and appear wherever they are wanted. In small estates, or small islands, any calamity makes a deep and permanent impression on population, such as famine, plague, small-pox; or war; which is exemplified in Indian tribes, and proved by many cases in history. Some of these causes have lately operated in the West Indies. This is a point to be allowed for. All chastisement also with respect to Negroes is not cruelty. The owners of slaves generally withdraw them from

all public justice; so that criminals, who would be publicly executed elsewhere, are often kept alive by their master, and liable to be found punished again and again from repeating their faults. Distributive justice occasions many punishments, as one slave is to be protected against every other Slave; and when one slave pilfers from another, then the master interferes. The care of the Negroes themselves, as to their health, provisions, clothing, family, and the like, occasions other punishments. All this is to be distinguished from punishments to enforce labour, or arising from cruelty. So far are the Negroes from being neglected, that infinite anxiety occurs with many masters about their slaves, whom they often visit in person when in sickness; and the evidence before the House has stated, that nine pounds sterling have been given for attending a difficult case in midwifery. Many diseases are new to Europeans in the Islands, and require time to admit of a plan of cure. This diminution of numbers in Negroes in the Colonies may happen without cruelty, as I hope I have proved, and such diminution at present there certainly is. Circumstances of a very different kind, respecting the Colonies, require some notice to prevent misconstruction.

The objections which some persons have to consuming sugar when it comes from the West Indies, because it is made by slaves, are liable for example to produce mischief, which it is worthy of obviating, by observing, that as indigo is a plant which has no offals, and is good for neither man nor beast; so sugar is an article of cultivation known to be favourable to both; and as the Planters will not consent to keep their Negroes idle, and cannot pay the expence of providing for them if they did, it is best to let the Negroes be employed on what is most advantageous for them. Another objection is, that the crops of the Sugar Colonies are subject to many casualties, which make them precarious objects of attention to the mother country; but it should be remembered, that gentlemen here have farmers interposed between themselves and the fluctuations of their crops; whereas in the Islands, the Planters in general hold their estates in hand, cultivate them themselves, and therefore feel every variation of crops. A third objection is, that the Colonists are

monopolists, and sell sugar dear, and get great profits. The Colony-system, which is the occasion of a *mutual* monopoly, has indeed given advantages to some Planters ; but other Planters have purchased from the first comers, so as to have bare profits left to them at present.

On the whole, to revert to the Negroes, I have gone over the island, from one end to the other, and I have seen little of the great cruelty to Negroes talked of. None at all on the estate where I resided ; and the whip, the stocks, and confinement alone, have been seen by me in use in other places ; and I have been on the island seven months. Some Slaves belonging to my father's estate once brought me some pine-apples ; I did not chuse to give them their price, and they took them away. In fact, my father's own Slaves, when they received money for over-hours, spent it in their own way. They did not usually come home at their dinner hour, but took a longer time at supper.

Notwithstanding all I have said, I acknowledge there is room for much amendment. Those persons who complain of the Colonists may do much service by going out to the islands, and by teaching the planters how to take care of their estates, and preserve the Negroes ; for which purpose many Planters are ready to sell their properties to them at advantageous prices. Missionaries, some of the Clergy for instance, at present in the gallery, and witnesses of the debate, may be of the utmost use in the islands. The Catholics in the Ceded Islands, and the Moravians at Antigua, have each of them been of great benefit ; and many Planters, and several of the Local Houses of Assembly. We recommended attention to the expedient. Where religion is once instilled, there will be less punishment, more work done, and the work better done ; more marriages, more issue, and more attachment to their masters and to the government.

Another article of much importance, is to found Medical Societies. Medical men have much enthusiasm often, and more than in most other professions ; and certainly more than in the church, or the law, or the army. Their communications to the public will contribute greatly to the public benefit. They will

will have many new diseases to encounter, among the Negroes in the islands, where there is no ancient practice, nor knowledge derived from neighbouring countries, to assist them.— The diseases of Negro infants are particularly worthy their attention, as I myself know no remedy for the great disease by which infants are carried off in such prodigious numbers.

Task-work is another improvement, which I wish to have introduced. There are inconveniences in it easily avoided, such as having too much strain upon the Negro at one time, and too much idle time at his command in consequence, at another, &c. &c.

Premiums have been given to mothers and to overseers, for the number of children reared by them; but *fathers* have hitherto been forgotten, who may contribute much to this necessary work. To premiums may be added honorary distinctions, and several solid advantages, which would cost nothing to the owner.

Negro evidence should be allowed to be given in courts of law, at the discretion of the court or jury to accept it, according to the nature of the case.

Cruel masters ought to be kept in order, in various ways. Their Negroes should be taken from them, and put into trust. Every instrument of punishment should be banished beside the whip, to which may be added confinement. The limitation of the number of lashes in the case of the whip being insufficient, it should be ordered, that the punishment should not be repeated till after due intervals. The repetition of thirty-nine lashes should be substituted for four-score. Perhaps even the whip will soon be found to be useless. No danger can occur in making examples of white persons for oppression of their Slaves. Justice is of more consequence than artifice; and principles of more influence than individuals. But it is too late to hesitate; the thing must be. The public expect it. The characters of those Colonists, whose conduct is exemplary, are hurt by being confounded with those of other men of a lower and more base order. It is terrible to think how far the principle of sheltering the whites may go, which yet in effect, ought to extend no farther than is *necessary* to

secure the services of the Slave on one side, and his protection on the other. Mr. Locke, indeed, in his Constitution of Carolina, says, that the authority and power of the master is absolute; but he is obliged to leave the Slave at least the choice of his religion, as well as the liberty of attending it.*

If the Abolition of the Slave Trade does pass, I trust some attention will be paid to indemnification. Without going farther into the subject at present, it cannot be forgotten that many thousand acres have been sold in the Ceded Islands, for 6 or 700,000l. and that many hundred thousand acres have long paid quit-rents in Jamaica, though not fully cultivated. The only indemnity wanted is that of labourers, which is an indemnity in kind. If free labourers can be found in Africa, the Planters will be glad of them; as they only want labour, whether paid for daily or otherwise. They do not want slaves to tyrannize over. Perhaps it is, after all, from African labourers, free or otherwise, that the whole of the parts of America, now unsettled, will finally be peopled. I beg leave to conclude, by asking, whether Mr. Wilberforce does not design to suffer his question to be divided; namely, to have it voted generally first, for the Abolition, without any limitation; and then to leave room for the insertion of a limited time, if voted for?

MR. WILBERFORCE. I am happy to find, that, though the Honourable Gentleman does not think with me that an *immediate* Abolition ought to take place, still he is of opinion an *Abolition* should take place.

* Since charity obliges us to wish well to the souls of men, and religion ought to alter nothing in any man's civil estate or right, it shall be lawful for Slaves, as well as others, to enter themselves, and be of what church or profession any of them shall think best, and thereof be as fully members as any freemen. But yet, no Slave shall hereby be exempted from that civil dominion his master hath over him, but be in all other things in the same state and condition he was in before.

Every freeman of Carolina shall have absolute power and authority over his Negro Slaves, of what opinion or religion soever.

Mr. H. THORNTON. I confess to you, Sir, I have felt some kind of regret, that the persons who this day stand the most forward in opposing the Motion of my Honourable Friend, should both of them be mercantile Gentlemen, both of them also declaring themselves to be considerably interested in the question. I was in hopes that some more political persons might have led that side of the debate, and that I might have been spared the mortification of seeing the commercial character discredited, as it must be, if commercial Gentlemen are to take the lead in opposing the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

I am afraid an opinion has already gone forth in this country, that on the one side of the present question are all the thinking, the disinterested, the liberal, the more virtuous part of the community, as well as all the chief political characters of the country; and that on the other side a mere narrow mercantile interest is opposed to them. For the sake, therefore, of our mercantile reputation and honour, I, who consider myself as one of that body, could undoubtedly have wished that the odium of supporting this horrid trade might not light so peculiarly upon us.

It appears to me, that not one word of all that has fallen from the two Honourable Gentlemen who spoke last, applies in reality to the *main question* before the Committee; and it is a circumstance extremely remarkable, that the two Honourable Gentlemen, who seem to lead the opposition to the Motion before you, should both of them have either quite neglected or purposely avoided to touch at all on that point on which my Honourable Friend has rested the whole stress of his argument.

They have neither of them, in any one part of their speeches, so much as adverted to the manner of procuring Slaves on the coast of Africa, and this my Hon. Friend has always stated to be the very jet of the whole question. They both have urged it upon the House, that the Slaves are well used in the West Indies, and that more importations are wanted; but it really does not seem to have occurred to them, nor to have made any part of their consideration, whether these fresh Slaves are got from Africa by fair and proper means, or whether they are obtained,

obtained (as has been charged upon them) by rapine, robbery, and murder.

The substance of the speeches of the two Honourable Gentlemen, appears to me to have been this: The one Honourable Gentleman argued that the Slaves were sufficiently happy, according to the present system, in the West Indies; the other Honourable Gentleman pointed out a great variety of particulars by which much improvement might be made in their condition. In this respect, we quite agree with the Honourable Gentleman who spoke last. We say, as he does, that a variety of measures may be taken for the advantage of the Slaves, and the improvement of their population. We agree with him, that these improvements have been *speculated* upon, and by some individual Gentlemen, *in their closets*, have seriously been thought of. But then we say also, that it is nothing, in fact, but the Abolition of the Slave Trade, that will reduce these speculations into *practice*; and that the æra of its Abolition will be the æra of beginning this new system, which nothing short of this will induce the West Indians in good earnest to accomplish. The one Honourable Gentleman tells us, that he has been over to the West Indies for the sake of knowing the real state of things there. The other Honourable Gentleman tells us, he also has resided there. It is the West Indies, and the West Indies only, that they speak of; for neither the one nor the other of them appears, ever for one moment, even in imagination, to have travelled to Africa.

The dreadful injustice of this trade consists in the African part of the question. Africa is to be stripped of its inhabitants, no matter by what means, in order to supply a population that is said to be wanted in the West Indies. And thus the Honourable Gentlemen have reminded me of the Dutch proverb, "My son, get money, honestly if you can—but get money." The proverb, indeed, is improved in the present instance, by the substitution of a word, which renders it a thousand times more profligate; for the present maxim is, "Get *Slaves*, honestly if you can—but get *Slaves*."

I wish as much as the two Honourable Gentlemen who spoke last, to consider this question in a mercantile point of view.

view. But when I say this, I do not mean in a narrow, selfish, or personal view, but on the liberal and enlarged principles of national commerce.

It happens in trade, as it does in every other profession of life, that there are certain individuals, and perhaps certain branches of the profession, that are a scandal and disgrace to it; and that man, Sir, is, in my opinion, the best friend to his profession, whatever his profession be, who endeavours to separate every thing in it that is fair and just and legitimate, from every thing that is irregular and illegitimate, who distinguishes what is honourable from what is vile, and fairly surrenders up to the just condemnation of Parliament and of the country, every practice and every principle of his profession, which is found to be inconsistent with the dictates of humanity and justice. I think that I am doing a service to that profession, to which I consider myself as belonging, by this observation, and that I am rescuing commerce itself from the foul imputations under which it labours, by the endeavours that have been made to consider the Slave Trade as a necessary link in the chain, or an essential part of the national commerce.

It cannot be necessary that I should enter much at length into the nature of this trade, and the manner of its being carried on in Africa. My Honourable Friend has established this part of his question beyond all controversy. He has this day added to all the other mass of evidence, two or three farther stories of enormities committed in Africa; insomuch that I should think that no man in the House, commercial or not commercial, could have failed to be deeply impressed by them. The Honourable Gentlemen, however, seem to have taken no notice of them, and to remain still unmoved by any thing that relates to the African part of the question.

Happening, however, in my situation of a Director of the Sierra Leone Company, to become a good deal acquainted with some circumstances that respect the Slave Trade in that part, although the same kind of facts are already sufficiently established in the body of evidence on your table, it may not be improper for me to enter, for a few minutes, into this subject. The Committee may perhaps be enabled, by a few familiar

instances, to judge still more clearly what is the nature of that trade which they are requested not to abolish.

I will first, however, premise, that what I am going to mention are facts coming within the actual view of the person from whom I had them.—That they have arisen since the last year's decision on this subject.—That they have all come within the observation of one single individual; have happened in the space of about three or four months, on one side of the river Sierra Leone, and within half a mile or a mile of the little town where the Agent of the Sierra Leone Company was then living. I may also observe, that the particular part of Africa which I am speaking of, has been by no means charged in the evidence with being a scene of peculiar violence; on the contrary, my Honourable Friend seems to have had rather less suspicion of the prevalence of kidnapping, and of other outrages, in this than in most other parts. Will the House then accept of this as a specimen of what the African Slave Trade is? and will they judge of the other parts, where the same minute information is wanting, by this sample?

Mr. Falconbridge, Agent to the Sierra Leone Company, sitting one evening in the town of the free settlers, who went out some years ago from England, heard a great shout, and immediately afterwards the report of a gun. Fearing an attack upon his little settlement, he instantly armed forty of the settlers, and rushed with them to the place from whence the sound came; he found a poor wretch, who had been crossing over from a neighbouring town, in the hands of a party of kidnappers, who were tying his hands; and it appeared that the shout and the report of the gun were the expressions of joy at having had the good luck to catch the man: Although this unhappy wretch was shrieking bitterly, the Company's Agent could not think of rescuing him, knowing, that from the defenceless state of his own town, retaliation might be made on the settlers residing there. Another person, who was an eye-witness to this scene, confirmed the story to me.

On another day a young woman, living half a mile off, was sold, without any criminal charge whatever, to one of the

slave

slave ships. She was well acquainted with our Agent's wife, and had been with her the day before. Her cries were heard, but it was impossible to rescue her ; and she therefore is gone to improve the population of the West Indies.

At another time, a young lad, about sixteen years of age, himself one of the free settlers who went from England, was caught by a neighbouring chief, two or three miles off, as he was straggling alone from home, and sold for a slave, charged with no crime or fault whatever. The pretext was, that some one else in the town had committed an offence, and the first person who could be found was seized in consequence ; being seen in his chains before he was got to the ship, he was happily recovered by the free settlers seizing and threatening to sell a man of the same town where the chief resided.

In order to mark to the House, still more forcibly, the scenes of domestic misery to which the Slave Trade gives birth, I will now mention the case of one individual family, the only family that has come under my immediate view ; and this also may serve as a familiar instance of the wretchedness, which, in a thousand similar cases, the Slave Trade must, from its very nature, give occasion to. I mean the family of king Naimbanna, the king or chief of that country ; a man remarkable for the peaceableness of his disposition, protected as much as any man can be protected from these violences ; attached to his family, living as securely as he can on his little island, wishing to keep peace, and to promote the happiness of all around him. It has happened to this respectable person, in no less than three separate instances, to have some branches of his family kidnapped, and carried off to the West Indies. At one time three were decoyed on board ship, on pretence of buying something of them, and carried off, no one knows whither, by a Danish slave ship. At another time, another relation was induced to pilot a slave vessel down the river ; he begged to be put on shore when he came opposite his own town, but he was pressed to pilot her down to the mouth of the river. The Captain then pleaded the impracticability of putting him on shore, carried him to Jamaica, and actually sold him for a slave ; happily, however, a letter was conveyed

by another vessel to Jamaica immediately after, and the man, with some difficulty, having applied, as I understand, to the Governor of Jamaica, having proved that he was kidnapped, and having the advantage (which was a most material point) of being able to speak English, was restored to his family at Sierra Leone.

Another connection of King Naimbanna was also kidnapped, and is now, no doubt, working under the whip of some overseer. He also is gone to increase the population of our islands, and is doomed to perpetual slavery in the West Indies.

If the Honourable Gentleman over the way (Mr. Vaughan) will excuse my troubling him for the printed Reports of the Sierra Leone Company, out of which he has quoted one passage to the House, I should be glad to read from it part of a letter from King Naimbanna, addressed to Mr. Grenville Sharp, on this subject.

Mr. Vaughan having handed the book to Mr. H. Thornton, he read the following passage: "It has been told that these "people (the free settlers from England) would in time drive "me, by force of arms, back into the country, and take "my ports from me. I have received several accounts from "factories and Captains of ships (viz. slave factories and "slave Captains) against the settlement, which I took no "notice of, as I conceived it was, in my opinion, spite or envy "that they had against their living in the country; but have "served them in any little request they asked of me, and have "endeavoured to keep peace between them and my people, "and also among themselves, by settling a great many dis- "quiets between them. It was pleasure to do it, as I thought "they would become useful to us all in this country, by teach- "ing us things we know not; and common reason must tell, "that the most ignorant people in the world, would be glad "to see their country made good, if they had idea how it "might be done. And again, I must let you know, that "if there were no other reason for my wishing for the welfare "of the settlement, I should do it that there might be stop "put to the horrid depredations that are so often committed "in this country, by all countries that come here to trade.

" There

“ There are three distant relations of mine now in the West Indies, carried away by one Captain Cox, Captain of a Danish ship ; their names as follow : Corpro, Banna, and Morbour. These were taken out of my rive Sierra Leone. I know not how to get them back. I never hurt or deprived any person of their right or property, or withheld from them what is their due ; so I only let you know of these lads, that there will be an account taken of them one day or other.—I ever was partial to the people of Great Britain, for which cause I have put up with a great deal of insults from them, more than I should from any other country.”

I will mention one other story, of so horrible a nature as almost to exceed belief. It is the case of a son who sold his own father, in the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone, for whom he got a considerable price ; for as the father was rich in the number of his domestic slaves, it was not doubted that he would redeem himself almost at any price. The old man accordingly sold twenty-two of his domestic slaves, as the price of his ransom ; and the rest of his domestics, being from that time filled with apprehensions of being on some ground or other sold to the slave ships, fled from the dwelling of their master, to the mountains of Sierra Leone, where they now drag on a miserable and precarious life. The son himself was sold in his turn, soon after. In short, the whole of that unhappy peninsula, as I learn from eye-witnesses, has been desolated by the trade in slaves. Towns are seen standing without inhabitants, all along the coast, in several of which our Agent has been. Every man is armed, if he stirs from home. Formerly the country was in a state much nearer to civilization. The old men at Sierra Leone will tell you, that before the Slave Trade had riten, there were even some iron manufactories upon the coast : but every part accessible to the slave ships, appears to have become a scene of desolation and ruin.

I hope, Sir, after what I have now said, that the House will think me fully justified in considering the present question, not as if it were the *abolition of a trade*, but as the abolition of something

something the *most opposite to trade* that can possibly be conceived. Unfortunately, the Slave Trade has got the name of a trade, and many people have been deceived by the mere expression:—so far from being a trade, it is absolutely the reverse of it! It is a *war*, it is not a *trade*. It is a *crime*, it is not a *commerce*. It is that which *prevents* the introduction of a *trade* into Africa, and this in a thousand ways, as I could easily prove, if I were not afraid of trespassing too far on the patience of this Committee. It is the most *anti-commercial* of any thing that can well be imagined; preventing even the introduction of those antecedent measures towards the establishment of a trade, which are in the first place necessary. I will mention one circumstance that has called up much of my attention, which might not commonly occur. The want of cultivation, as well as population, in those parts which would naturally be chosen for an European settlement, is a circumstance that exceedingly aggravates the unhealthiness of that climate. It is only by clearing and cultivating the lands that the climate can be made healthy, and it is the Slave Trade that, by dispersing the inhabitants of the coast, and causing the lands to remain uncultivated, makes the coast at present much more unhealthy than the interior parts. In short, we have found, in attempting to settle our little colony, that it is the Slave Trade which forms our chief difficulty; that it is an obstacle which opposes itself to us in a thousand ways; that it creates more difficulty and embarrassment than all the natural impediments, and is more hard to contend with than any difficulties of climate, soil, or natural dispositions of the people.

I think I may fairly say, therefore, that it is on commercial principles, and as wishing well to the commercial interest of this country, that I plead for its abolition.

Having said so much on the commercial part of this subject, there is one other ground on which I will say a few words; and I am the more induced to do it, because I think my Honourable Friend was rather short upon this part of his argument. I speak of the *opinion of the people of this country*, which has lately begun to shew itself. I do not wish to turn this too much

into

into a constitutional question, being of opinion, that perhaps we are too apt in this House to consider every question we argue as some way affecting the constitution. I will, however, make this plain observation, that it is of the utmost consequence to the maintenance of the constitution of this country, that the *reputation of Parliament* should be maintained. The people, and especially the more thinking and virtuous part of the community, consider this as a question that addresses itself to their *consciences*; and they are not likely to desist from petitioning this House. Nothing, therefore, can more prejudice the character of Parliament in the country. In no way can we give a greater handle to those who wish ill to the present constitution, than by any vote of ours, that should imply, that the *Legislative Body* of this country is the *more corrupt* part of it. It is of the utmost importance that we should not be thought by our constituents slow to adopt principles of justice, or more deaf than they are themselves to the voice of humanity. The people have shown, by the terms which may be seen in their petitions, as well as the petitions themselves, that they do not consider this question merely in the light, in which the Honourable Gentlemen who spoke last, seemed to have considered it; but they feel a *guilt* attaching itself to them, so long as this trade lasts, and from this guilt it is, that they pray us, their representatives, to deliver them. It seems to me, in this view of the question, that it is a very serious subject indeed.

It has been sometimes insinuated, that Parliament, by interfering in this trade, departs from its proper functions. No idea can be more absurd or false than this. Why are we sent to Parliament? Is not the correction of abuses among all the subjects over whom we have authority, the proper business of the Legislature? To watch over the various abuses as they arise in the several professions of life, and to make from time to time fresh laws for their correction, is our proper, and even our daily and ordinary business. There are many evils, which, from their distance or insignificance, escape our notice at first; but when they are grown into consequence, it is then that the Legislature notices them, and thinks itself indispensably bound to interfere. In every view of the subject, therefore, I most heartily support the

the motion of my Honourable Friend. I wish for the Abolition of this Trade, First, as I have stated, for the sake of the commercial honour, and the commercial interest of this country. I wish for its abolition also, because I wish to maintain the good fame and reputation of Parliament, on which so materially depends the maintenance of our happy constitution ; but most of all I wish the Abolition of this Trade on those eternal principles of justice, as well as humanity, to which nations, as well as individuals, are bound in all their conduct to conform themselves.

Mr. VAUGHAN, in explanation. The Honourable Gentleman who spoke last supposes that I am a friend to Slavery. I said I had some property in the West Indies, and, being an elder son, might have looked to the possession of Negroes ; but I declare I never had, nor ever will be possessed of a slave. As to the Slave Trade, I thought what I had said might have explained my feelings. I would sacrifice any thing to a prudent termination of both evils, for all persons must wish that neither had commenced. I was anxious to protect absent characters, and confined myself to parts which might, in the result, remove prejudices from the Colonists.

Mr. THORNTON, in reply to Mr. VAUGHAN. I have not meant, by any thing I have said, to reflect *personally* on the Honourable Gentleman as a friend to slavery. On the contrary, I have wished rather to say every thing that is respectful of both the Honourable Gentlemen. It is rather the Slave *Trade*, than slavery, I have spoken against.

Colonel TARLETON. Sir, notwithstanding all the violence with which this motion was supported last year; notwithstanding the indefatigable exertions of the Junto, since that period, which are fully evinced by the pile of Petitions that have been placed upon the table ; I shall not shrink from the question, but proceed

proceed to argue against a speculation which, if carried into effect, would, I conceive, prove highly prejudicial to the immediate and future interests of this country; being strongly and firmly convinced that humanity, to become laudable and estimable, must be tempered with justice.

I do not consider it necessary, after the thorough investigation which this question has undergone, and the adjudication it received from a respectable majority of this House last year, again to enter into all the minutiae, which are necessarily implicated in so important a debate, and which have been already so amply discussed; but I shall touch upon the different prominent features, and shall never, I trust, lose sight of that philanthropy which the Abolitionists fallaciously esteem to be their vantage-ground on this occasion. As I am one of those that do not think this speculation can, after the hearing and re-hearing it has already obtained, be prolonged to any inordinate length, especially when I recollect, that affairs of the greatest importance to this House and this Country have lately been voted by large majorities without enquiry, and almost without discussion on the part of Administration. Yet as one of the Representatives of a great and flourishing commercial town, as a friend to the rights and property of many thousands of Manufacturers, Merchants, and Planters, and an Advocate likewise for Humanity, good Policy, and Justice, I will proceed briefly, and, I trust, clearly, to state those arguments which occur to me against the Abolition of the African Trade.

I shall not now notice the Origin of the Trade; the sanction it has received from Parliament; the state of ignorance in which the natives of Africa are involved; the horrid despotism which pervades it, in consequence of that barbarism; or compare the mild government of the West Indies, with the savage tyranny of the Kings and Princes of Africa; but endeavour to point out the impolicy and impossibility of abolishing the African Trade. The different States of Europe are, and have been for ages past, solicitous to increase their Commerce, their Colonies, and their Slave Trade; and by experience have found, that the prosperity of all depended upon the success of each. I need not enumerate the Portuguese, the Danes, the Dutch, the Spa-

niards, and the French, who were reported in this House to have been on the start to outrace us in the suppression of the Slave Trade, but who, by authorities which I have now in my hand, are actually foremost in the course for its continuance and extension. It is apparent, therefore, as I had the honour, on a former occasion, to remark to this House, that if we were disposed to sacrifice our African Trade, other nations would not enter into so ruinous a plan. The French, for instance, depend greatly on their West India trade as a source both of revenue and navigation (I have it not now in contemplation to expatiate on the situation of St. Domingo; to that I shall presently advert); will they suffer a trade, upon which their whole commerce turns, to languish? No; they would thank us for our mistaken ideas of humanity, and they would profit by them; the disadvantage would be our's; the advantage would be their's; and the condition of the African would be exactly the same, whether he crossed the Atlantic in an English, or any other European bottom; and should we persist in so wild a project as Abolition, the Continent will soon be supplied with English houses, English ships, and English capitals.

Having stated the present situation of Europe, with regard to the African Trade, it does not, I think, require much penetration or judgment to detect and expose the fallacious doctrine of those Sectaries, who would attempt to abolish what other nations encourage and protect. A portion of common sense, which in general contributes more to the public good than sophistry or enthusiasm, and which frequently disperses the mists which Eloquence, Prejudice, and Fanaticism, endeavour to raise, to cover their own purposes, enables the majority of this House, and of this Country, to declare, that an Abolition on the part of England alone, will not abolish the trade in general.

Unless a place of Congress shall be appointed, and unless all the nations of Europe accede to such a proposition, and when their deputies shall be assembled, enter fully into the project of Abolition; we only create difficulties and embarrassments for our own Merchants and Manufacturers, without effecting any other purpose; Nay, perhaps our present wild, fanatical manner of conducting this speculation, may alienate the affec-

tions of our Colonists, who, through a deluge of blood, may work out for themselves another independence, or may throw themselves into the arms of those confederated states, whose constitution tells us, that they have a sacred regard for public faith, and private property.

Though I sincerely wish, for the honour of human nature, that an eternal veil could be drawn over the recent horrible transactions in St. Domingo, I cannot help noticing some circumstances, because they seem to originate in the same principles and practices, which some people in this Country have lately adopted, with regard to the West-India Islands. I shall not attempt to describe the barbarities and horrors of those scenes, which have been displayed at St. Domingo---a bare recital of which, would make an impression upon the hardest heart, and most inaccessible understanding, without the assistance of pathetic eloquence, or laboured ingenuity. I shall therefore turn the attention of the Committee from a contemplation of rapes, of massacres, of conflagrations, of impaled infants, and acts of parricide, and endeavour to point out concisely, the impolicy, as well as danger, of our now pursuing the object of Abolition.

Partial extracts of the debates of this House, and the garbled statements of evidence, which have been so industriously circulated, both in this Country, and through all the Colonies, have created alarm and distrust throughout every Island in the West-Indies; all the letters from that quarter of the Globe, speak most forcibly of the mischiefs and dangers that may arise, and which actually threaten the white Inhabitants. I have within this last week received a letter from a respectable officer at Antigua, describing the sickly situation of the King's troops, owing to the frequent detachments required from them, in order to awe or suppress insurrections amongst the Negroes, throughout the different Islands. Government has been made acquainted with these circumstances, and the perils which consequently impended, and to relieve the minds of the Colonists, and to counteract the absurd vote of the Minister, that very Minister has been compelled to send a reinforcement of Infantry, and a Regiment of Light Dragoons; the vote of this night

may require additional troops, and if this chimerical project is to be revived every year, the Army of England may be fully employed in the West Indies.

On the subject of the Petitions, which have been lately presented, I must beg leave to observe, that though I entertain the highest respect and veneration for the Petitions of the people of England, I cannot yield my admiration on the present occasion, because I think that their sentiments have not been fairly collected. The form and language of the Petitions bear too strong a resemblance to each other, they appear to be the manufacture of the Sectaries of the Old Jury; and the signatures do not stamp them, in my mind, with any additional credit or authority. Unexpected and unsolicited letters have lately poured in upon me, from the most respectable individuals, in all parts of England, describing the various artful modes adopted for obtaining and creating Signatures, and to an honourable Member now in my eye, I am indebted for an extensive correspondence, even in the remotest parts of Scotland.

In some villages and towns, mendicant physicians, and itinerant clergymen, have exercised almost unexampled zeal and industry, and displayed the ingenuity of Scapin to extort names from the sick, the indigent, and the traveller: in others, the grammar-schools have received ceremonious visits, from the indefatigable emissaries of the Abolitionists; and the boys have been indulged with the gladsome tidings of a holiday, provided they would sign their own, and the names in the neighbourhood; and, when on examination, the Inhabitants could not furnish Signatures, sufficiently numerous, they have been desired to employ their imagination, to give to "airy " nothing, a local habitation and a name!"

Colonel Tarlton then adverted to the Letters in his possession, to support what he had just advanced, and amongst them read the following extracts:

" *Warrington, March, 1792.*

" Sir,

" Having with pleasure frequently observed, that you are the Champion for the Trade of Liverpool, I beg leave to communicate to you a piece of intelligence I lately pick'd up, on my return from a journey to Manchester, relative to the mode pursued by the Partizans for the Abolition, in order

to procure as many names as they can to their Petitions. I fell in company with a very respectable Tradesman of Warrington, who told me he had a son just returned from school at Bolton ; where a Petition to Parliament for the Abolition had been industriously handed about, to obtain the signatures of all ranks of people, from the highest to the lowest ; and that in order to procure all the names they possibly could, real or imaginary, they waited on the school-boys, and not only got them to sign their own names, but also as many more names of their neighbours as they could recollect ; some of the arch boys (of less retentive memories) perceiving that those boys who could recollect most names met with the greatest applause, in order to receive a proportionable share of praise, first signed their own names with others they did recollect ; after that they invented new names, and put them down also.— Any comments I could make on such Petitions being considered as the sense of the people of Bolton, &c. to you would be superfluous—I only give you the fact, which I consider as my duty, as a well-wisher to the Merchants and Trade of Liverpool, to inform you of: therefore hope you will pardon the liberty I now take. I am,

With the greatest respect,

SIR,

Your most obedient,

humble Servant,

Colonel Tarlton has the original Letters in his possession, but does not feel authorized to publish the names of the Writers,

" HONoured SIR,

" Chester, March 30, 1792.

Knowing there was a Petition carried on here for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, signed by a number of names, a great number of which I thought was very improper should be sent to that Honourable House of which you are a Member, as it was chiefly children belonging to the different schools in this city ; amongst the rest, it was brought to the school of which I am a scholar, and was signed (by desire of my master) by every boy in the school that could write his name, myself excepted.

Your's respectfully,

Relative to the signatures of the boys, the Colonel referred to the following passage in a letter from Sheffield. " You have time to establish the truth of it by enquiry, before the matter is discussed, or by a line addressed to

" The Rev. CHARLES CHADWICK, master of the grammar-school.

" Rev. MATTHEW PRESTON, English grammar school.

" JOHN EADON, master of the free-writing school.

" Or most of the other writing school-masters in this place."

The Colonel observed, that he would not tire the patience of his hearers by reading letters in his possession written by respectable individuals resident at the following places :

Portsmouth	Culross
Ipswich	Manchester
St. Andrew's	Edinburgh
Carlisle	Hull
Dorchester	Chester, &c. &c. &c.
Swansea	

The Magistrates of the places whence these extraordinary Petitions have originated, have seldom been approached. The Town Halls have still more rarely had these Petitions displayed in them, in order to await the deliberation, the decision, or the signatures of the grave, respectable, and informed part of the community. No, Sir, parts of the flimsy hearsay evidence, which for a length of time oppressed and disgraced the table of this House, were mutilated, distorted, and reduced to the size of pamphlets, in order to promote their circulation throughout all the ale-houses and excise-offices in this kingdom, where the unwary and uninformed were tricked out of their humanity, by inflammatory extracts; and from such sources most of the petitions, which, I had almost said disgraced, the signers and the receivers, have been produced !

Great God, Sir, is this a decent, honourable, or decorous manner of learning, or showing to the world the sentiments of the people of this country ? No, Sir, it is equally an insult and mockery upon the people and Parliament of England.

I cannot help saying a few words at this moment on the difference of the evidence brought before the Privy Council, and the Select Committee of the House, by both parties, previous to the discussion of last year.

I need not stigmatize the Abolitionists, by mentioning the names of the generality of their evidences : nor need I say any thing more in eulogy of the principal evidences brought forwards by the Merchants and Planters, than merely repeat the names of Lord Shuldharn, Admiral Barrington, Admiral Arbuthnot, Admiral Edwards, Admiral Hotham, Commodore Gardner, Lord Macartney, Lord Rodney, Sir Ralph Payne,

Sir

Sir J. Dalling, Sir Archibald Campbell, Mr. Baillie, Mr. Hibbert, and a long list of respectable characters. If I was to analyse the bulk of the evidence, I should exhaust the patience of the Committee, in contrasting the ignorance, the malice, and fanaticism of some, with the veracity, the ingenuousness, and the candour of others. In short, I should exhibit, if I gave a true picture, a variegated view of the fair and foul principles which dignify and debase the human mind.

I have no small degree of satisfaction resulting from the opportunity the Honourable Gentleman, who opened this day's debate, has afforded me, of justifying a respectable body of my constituents. He has been pleased to enlarge upon the losses sustained on the passage from Africa to the West Indies. Notwithstanding his calculations, his fabrications, or his comments, I can pledge myself to this House, and this country, in asserting and maintaining the average loss *per cent.* does not exceed four and a half, since the regulations were imposed on the Slave Ships. If we advert to the voyages of the King's troops, or the transportation to Botany Bay, the comparison is highly favourable to the African Trade.

Another assertion of the Hon. Gentleman's I beg leave likewise to repel. He still chooses to enlarge the mortality amongst the seamen, and from thence draws an inference prejudicial to the Town of Liverpool, and City of Bristol.—For the former of those ports (and we may conclude that the same trade is conducted in the same manner as at the latter) I must again repeat what I had the honour to deliver to the House last year, as there is no event which gives me reason to doubt its veracity:—

“ The Liverpool African Trade is, in proportion to the number of hands it employs, the most productive nursery for seamen that belongs to the Commerce of this country. For, admitting for a moment the exaggerated calculations which have gone abroad, of the mortality of the Seamen employed in this Trade; admitting that 642, out of 3170 persons, die in the voyage of one year; admitting farther, that half this mortality falls upon that half of the crew which is composed of Seamen and Officers, and consequently that 321 Seamen perished in the course of one year's voyage, yet as 1585

“ Landsmen

“ Landsmen from the single port of Liverpool alone, in spite
 “ of that fabricated mortality, contributes annually, by means
 “ of this Trade, an augmentation of 943 persons to the Navy
 “ of Great Britain.”

I shall not trespass longer on the patience of the Committee, farther than making one more observation on the Hon. Gentleman’s Speech, in which so little novelty occurred. He was pleased to say that white people, and the sailors in particular, could work in the West Indies.—In answer to that assertion, I shall refer to what I deem good authority—the testimony of many respectable Officers. It would be tiresome to enumerate the names of all the Officers who have served in that part of the world, for they generally, I believe, without a single exception, maintain the truth of what I advance.—If he does not like Naval or Military Authorities, I will indulge the Honourable Gentleman with other proofs of my assertion. It has been found by experience that the natives of Europe could not endure any labour under the intemperate heat of the West Indies.—Frequent attempts have been made to cultivate estates with white labourers. In this experiment the French are said to have lost 12,000 whites in the year 1763. The Assembly of Jamaica offered great encouragement in the year 1749, to induce white families to settle in that Island, but of the few that went, in ten years there were no remains.

With respect to the value of the African and West India Trade to this country, examined either separately or collectively, no person has yet presumed to doubt the benefits derived from them. The Manufacturers and Merchants of this country find their interest materially allied to the existence of the former; and though, on a prior occasion, the Honourable Gentleman who moved the question was pleased to style the African Trade “a Lottery at Liverpool,” it has been found by experience to be generally a profitable concern, and that the morals and fortunes of the individuals, who enter into it, are not so much debased and ruined, as those of their neighbours, by their connections with the state lottery of this country.

By an Abolition, several hundred ships, several thousand sailors, and some millions of industrious mechanics, will lose their employment, and be rendered worse than useless; for a sudden chasm of this sort will undoubtedly prove of the most dangerous consequences to society.

A yearly *deficit* of six millions, which is the lowest average, and admitted by all sides of the House, and which will fall on the manufacturers, ship-builders, and a large body of the working people, will be sensibly felt in this country, though her industry and commerce flourish almost beyond calculation. And if I add to this defalcation of our commerce and revenue, the loss of our Colonies, which are estimated at seventy millions, which, from the best authorities, are totally dependent on the African Trade, what new discovery or contrivance is to remedy an evil which would palsy the very existence of the national prosperity?

The opposition to the question now before the House, is so connected with the well-being and good government of this country, that if I was an enemy to the Constitution of England, which has been the work of ages, and which, though a good, all must acknowledge to be a very complicated, machine; I would vote for the Abolition of the African Trade. It certainly will be allowed, that a government, constituted like the one we now enjoy, is a new work in the annals of mankind. The great extent of commerce and *crédit*, and the stupendous national debt, which overshades the revenue of Great Britain, are circumstances to which we can find no parallel in history. Through the medium of science, and the extension of labour and manufactures, we are enabled to penetrate into every country, to become the merchants of every state, and the citizens of every clime.

To our commercial success, therefore, we may fairly attribute our great increase of power, wealth, and consequence; and our public and national debt has unfortunately, whether from error in Government, or not, I will not pretend to decide, kept pace with that power, that wealth, and that consequence. If, therefore, we attempt to circumscribe the means which have enabled us to arrive at the summit of com-

mercial prosperity, shall we not endanger our Constitution by rashly drying up the sources which swelled the tide, and gave rapidity to the current of our commercial importance and national revenue.

I need not enter into a minute description of the origin of the African Trade, or the origin of the National Debt. If either were to commence *de novo*, there would not be found in this House, or in this country, a more strenuous opposer of such speculations ; but circumstanced as we now are, it is the interest and duty of every good citizen, not to oppress the main-spring of Government, but to facilitate and regulate its movements with care and circumspection.

If, Sir, we violate the sanction of Parliament, and touch the vitals of our Commerce, with a rough and injudicious hand, we endanger the existence of our present Constitution. By the moderation and prudent interference of this House, the African Trade, if mal-practices exist in it, may be meliorated ; by timely information we may correct the abuses in Government, increase the general prosperity of this country, and restore and invigorate the powers of the Legislature. But, if with an imprudent temerity, we daringly strike at the root of our commerce, ~~will~~ undermine our present advantages, and destroy our future expectations ; and the Representatives of the people will be guilty of suicide upon the laws, the prosperity, and the constitution of England.

Mr. M. MONTAGU.—I wish to bring to the recollection of the House, that on a former occasion, when my Honourable Friend (Mr. Wilberforce) introduced a Motion for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, I abstained from troubling the House with any argument. For, however anxious I may be to testify my opinion, and to prove that I have formed a judgment not more firm, than candid and deliberate, upon the subject ; yet knowing, that from the ardor with which I have entered on the pursuit, and from the many hours I have been induced to spend upon it, I may be suspected of an intemperate zeal, and of somewhat of the feelings of a party, I have

been

been willing to yield my station in the contest to those who may be supposed to come with cooler imaginations; and have tied myself down, in the situation of a spectator, to an attentive consideration of the arguments adduced on each side of the question. It is in this position; that, divesting myself as far as I can of all I have thought before upon the subject, and giving a candid entertainment to the objections of the adversary, I have been more than ever confirmed in the soundness of my principles, and in the opinion of the policy, as well as justice, of the Abolition. It is now then no longer in my power, consistent with the duties I owe to my country, to justice, and humanity, to refrain from uttering what I conceived to be my unalterable sentiments upon the subject, and I entreat the House to believe, that it is in discharge of this duty I address them, and not from any impertinent desire of obtruding myself on their notice...

But before I enter on the argument, I wish to obviate a prejudice entertained against the friends of an Abolition of the Slave Trade, who are accused of proceeding in a rash and precipitate manner to their conclusion, upon abstract and impracticable grounds; and of insisting on an absurd extreme by Abolition, while they reject a wise, temperate, and practicable medium by Regulation. To do away this prejudice, I am desirous of offering some preliminaries to the adversary, which may serve as a just point of reference between us. All I require on their parts is to concede, that in the Slave Trade there exists a great evil, which must of necessity be remedied, and that the means of remedy ought to be such, as will be effectual to the object, and not an idle mockery and delusion. In return for this concession, I am ready to admit, that, inasmuch as it is the duty of legislators to remedy existing evils, and those evils particularly of the most extensive and pernicious influence, it is no less their duty to apply that remedy in the least hazardous manner the nature of the evil will admit, and to feel themselves responsible, that the hand of the physician should be the hand of a friend, and not the rash interference of an empiric. I hope the House will feel, that while I offer these principles as a standard by which to measure all, I have to say on

the subject, I am desirous to establish a fair and impartial criterion between the two parties.

With the impression of the latter strong upon my mind, I shall proceed to argue the question, and to lay before the House the reasons, which convince my mind, that no regulation, short of an Abolition of the trade, will be effectual; and that a regulation, by any of those means which alone can be thought likely to have any effect, will prove infinitely more dangerous to the security of the planters, both in their persons and property, than the Abolition. I shall not make any effort to prove, that the application of any regulations to the original grievance on the coast of Africa is impossible, because the truth there appears so obvious; that I may almost take it as a concession of the opponent. For how is it possible to ascertain the justice of the captivity of each individual, whom we force away into bondage? Can we establish tribunals all along the coast, and in every ship, to enquire into the offences committed by each slave, and into the legality of the punishment? What judges can we find for such an office? But admitting, for the argument's sake, that we could invent such a tribunal, as might ascertain the right of the seller to the persons of those who are enslaved on the coast, what expedient could we imagine to bring evidence of the justice of the captivity, of by far the greater number, who were brought from great distances inland? The impossibility of such regulations is so clear, that I shall not waste time in proving it. But before I pass to another part of the subject, I wish the House to pause, and recollect, that if it were indeed impossible to do away the evil of this part of the trade, how strong, how evident, how invincible ought to be the necessity pleaded for the continuance of what is irremediably unjust in its foundation!

I shall not dwell much upon the proof of the ineffectual of regulations as to the Middle Passage. My Honourable Friend has shown, that however the mortality might be abated in most of the ships, by the regulations of Sir William Dolben's Bill, yet, wherever a contagious distemper happens to break out (and such in many instances must always be expected) the greatest part of the cargo is swept away, and the

average

average of deaths is by these instances still kept up to a shocking and enormous height.

What I would wish principally to inculcate, is the impossibility of applying regulations in the West Indies, without more danger to the persons and property of the planters, than would accrue by the Abolition. This part of the argument I am particularly desirous to inforce, because I know that upon this, and upon the state of the population in the islands, the whole measure must rest with those to whom we must look for a majority, with the persons who admit the injustice of the trade, but who believe, or at least fear, the danger and impolicy of an Abolition. My first position here will be, that no regulations can be rendered effectual to the protection of the slave in the West Indies, which do not admit the evidence of the Negro in a Court of Justice. My second, that to admit the evidence of a Negro in a Court of Justice will be infinitely more dangerous to the persons and the property of the Planters than the Abolition of the Trade. In the first place, I would wish Gentlemen to consider what is to be done by regulation for the protection of the slave? Should it be enacted that the punishments be moderate? That the number of lashes be limited? The Colonial Legislature have already done as much as the magic of *words alone* can do upon the subject. Yet the evidence upon the Table uniformly tends to prove, that in spite of this law, the only protection of the slave is in the clemency of the master; because the whites, being one or two in number on a plantation, the offence, however atrocious and inhuman, exists not within the eye or reach of the law, though committed in the presence of a hundred slaves. Besides, that by splitting the offence, and inflicting the punishment at intervals, the law is evaded, although the fact be within the reach of evidence, by the accidental presence of a white man.

I beg leave to advert to the evidence of Captain Cook, of the 89th regiment, and of Chief Justice Otley, as to this point; the former relating a shocking instance of reiterated punishment, in contempt of the law, within his own knowledge; the latter declaring, that "he can devise no method of bringing a master, so offending, to justice, while the evidence

denee of the slave continues inadmissible." But let councils of protection, and guardians of the slaves be appointed to watch over their welfare, and to restrain the master. This again is a well-sounding expedient; but nugatory and absurd in practice. For what persons, resident in the islands, would be found, to whom that important and troublesome office could be intrusted, with a hope of a faithful discharge of its duties? Who is there, not only in the islands, but resident on every particular plantation, who will risque the comfort of his life by the exercise of so invidious an interference? But granting that men of such exalted and active beneficence could be found in the islands, as to sacrifice all their time, and all the friendship of their equals and associates, for the good of the slaves, what could they effect? Suppose the Honourable Gentleman who brought forward the motion were deputed, an unwelcome, indeed, but in all probability a very vigilant guardian of the slaves, what protection would the law enable him to afford to the slave? Could he be present at all times, and at all places, at once? That would be a task too arduous even for this active philanthropy. Yet if that were not the case, the offence to be redressed by him would require to be proved to him; and the same difficulties of proof would stand in the way of the guardian, as of any other tribunal.

I might urge many other arguments to prove that all regulations must be ineffectual, short of the admission of the slave to give evidence. But to admit the slaves to give evidence in their present state of civilization, would be of the most dangerous consequence to the safety and the property of the Planters; and to admit the slaves to any of the rights of citizens, where they so greatly out-number the whites, will be to make them in effect the masters. One Honourable Gentleman (Mr. Vaughan) has said, the slaves may be admitted to give evidence, leaving it to the judges to give weight, according to their discretion, to the depositions. I confess this appears to me to be fraught with a most hazardous principle of discontent; for how are the Negroes to be persuaded, that it is fit they shall be admitted to speak the truth, and then be disbelieved and disregarded? What a fermentation must such a conduct naturally excite in men dismissed with injuries unredressed, though abundantly proved, in their

their apprehension, by their testimony? If then it be proved, that no regulations are likely to be effectual, and it has been admitted, that the evil calls in an imperious and irresistible manner for a remedy, there is no expedient left but an Abolition. That an Abolition of the Trade would not only be effectual, but safe, and even beneficial to the Planters, has been irrefragably proved by the calculations of the state of population by a Right Honourable Gentleman, (Mr. Pitt) to which no answer has been even attempted to be given. And until such an attempt is made with success, I wish such Gentlemen (who I fear are many) as come down to vote with a slight view of the subject, upon the assurances of some of their friends (perhaps interested) who say that it is a dangerous expedient to abolish the trade, would consider seriously how they can reconcile their consciences to justify and continue the most horrible cruelty and injustice, upon a political necessity, not maintained except by assertion, but refuted in the calculations, and abandoned in argument, even by those whose authority they meant to follow in their decision.

I could wish two descriptions of persons to give their attention to what I admit to be only an argument to their discretion, but to what appears to me to be a very forcible consideration, and one which in wisdom ought to have great weight and influence on their conduct. I wish the Planters to consider the great increasing progress, which the opinion of the injustice of the Trade is making in the Nation at large, as manifested by the Petitions, which had almost obstructed the proceedings of the House by their perpetual introduction. They must begin to perceive, that it is no longer possible to stifle the business in the birth, that offended Justice will at length, with an uplifted arm, break down all opposition, and that the minds of the representatives would be found in union with the opinions of their constituents. It is now, therefore, for them to save their credit, and to take care that the retribution to the injured Africans shall not be made without their concurrence. The other description of persons, whose attention I request (and whom I have reason to believe to be a large body), are such.

such as have been led to ascribe the agitation of this question to the same spirit of abstract and impracticable equalization, which they dread to see applied to the destruction of order and good government in our invaluable Constitution. If there be any persons with this apprehension, they will do well to consider whether they had not better be in haste to destroy that association, and by separating the real evil from the imaginary grievance, to destroy the credit which the latter may derive from being connected in opinion with the former. If they neglect to remedy a most abominable and crying abuse, against which every feeling of reason, religion, and even political wisdom, revolts with abhorrence, do they not play into the hands of those, who construe their dread of innovation on other occasions, into an obstinate resistance of truth, justice, and expediency?

I shall now conclude with repeating a profession I formerly made, that I will never cease to promote the Abolition of the Slave Trade, with every faculty of body and mind, till the injuries of humanity are redressed, and the national character relieved from the deepest disgrace that is recorded in the annals of mankind.

Mr. WHITBREAD. The subject has undergone so full and fair a discussion, and the arguments that have been urged to prove that the Motion for the Abolition of the Slave Trade is founded in principles of impolicy and injustice, have so completely failed of their effect, that I do not deem it necessary to occupy much of the time of the Committee, and therefore shall not long detain them. Could I conceive that the trade is, as some have asserted it to be, founded on principles of humanity; could I conceive that the miserable Africans are rescued from death and torture in their own country, and that upon being carried to the West Indies, a happier clime and more luxuriant soil, they are put under the dominion of kind and humane masters; that their toil is light, and their labour easy; that their days are spent in healthy and pleasing occupation, and not consumed in dreary and oppressive labour, and that at evening they return to their homes, cheerfully to the song and the dance, and

retire

retire to rest, unsatigued, and with hearts at ease; that in the morning, they rise, invigorated by rest, and alert with cheerfulness, to pursue an occupation that is mild and easy; were he convinced, that in sickness they are attended with care and skill, and that their old age is rendered comfortable by the enjoyment of peace and plenty, and that they lay them down to sleep the sleep of death, in calmness and resignation; were I convinced, that these were circumstances that existed in truth, and are substantiated by fact, even then, I would vote that the Slave Trade be abolished; inasmuch, as I am convinced, that that which is in principle fundamentally wrong, no practice whatever can render right and pardonable. No argument can prove, nor any eloquence persuade me, that man is torn from his native country, and his dearest connections, for the purpose of nourishment, and that he is delivered into the hands of man, in order to warrant his safety, and procure his protection. Who will assert, that man, when delivered into the hands of man, will not be ill treated? Who will say, that he shall not suffer? It is the known effect of power upon the human heart, and it must necessarily happen, that not only those who were originally good, by being possessed of arbitrary power become bad, but that many exercise a greater degree of cruelty than they would otherwise have imagined, from the mere circumstance of their being enabled to do so with impunity. When man is subject to the dominion of his fellow creature, there must, on the one hand, be tyranny, and on the other, a deep sense of injury: it is the quality of despotism to corrupt the heart, and deaden the finer feelings of nature. Of the hardened and cruel among mankind, there are already too great a number, and to permit persons of that description, to possess power over their fellow creatures, is to suffer an evil that is dangerous and unjustifiable indeed. I beg leave to observe, that expressions have fallen from some of those who have contended for the humanity of the Slave Trade, that convince me, that barbarities exist in that traffic that are disgraceful to human nature. I have heard it asserted in this House, I do not impute it invidiously to any one, but it was an expression that forcibly struck my mind; I mean an expression of an Honourable Gentleman in his place in the last session

of Parliament, on the discussion of the Sierra Leone business, who, when he came to speak of the slaves, in an account of the selling off the stock of a plantation, said, that the slaves fetched less than their common price, because they were *damaged*!— Damaged! Does not this imply that the slave had spent the best part of his life in the service of a master, who parts with him for a small compensation, and leaves him to linger out the remainder of his miserable existence with a master, perhaps of more severe manners, a harsher nature, and in all probability not less arbitrary in his disposition? I cannot but mention a passage that I discovered in the perusal of a pamphlet published in the defence of the Slave Trade, the author of which, describing the happy situation of the negroes, among other felicitous circumstances observes, that a good negro wants no character, for his services may be seen, as it were, and his value appreciated, by the marks he bore of chains, galls, and lashes. What is that, but to say that such instruments of torture are made use of, and that lashes are inflicted that leave indelible marks? And who will say, that they were justly inflicted? An Honourable Gentleman, who this evening spoke for the first time in this House (Mr. Vaughan) has said, that he heartily wished for the Abolition of the trade, and yet has argued in favour of its continuance. That gentleman has declared, that upon going over to the West Indies, he was surprized to find the slaves in so good a situation; but he has also observed, that they are all poor and degraded, and putting slavery and cruelty out of the question, are better off than the poor of this country. What is it, we want to abolish? It is cruelty and slavery that we wish to abolish, and thereby to do away that dreadful distinction which degrades their condition, and reduces them below the level of their fellow creatures. The Honourable Gentleman has expressed his admiration of their resignation; but is it not that sort of resignation which is the consequence of despair? He has also said, that one of the overseers asked a slave, who was idle, “ What do you think your master bought you for? Did he not buy you to labour?” and that the slave thereupon directly began to work. Had the negro used any reply, what would have been the argument in answer, but those wails and scars which he could not have.

have resisted?—With respect to the assertion that the commerce of the country would be materially affected by an Abolition of the Slave Trade, as the subject has been so ably discussed, I will not detain the Committee upon that point. Nothing has passed to alter my opinion on the subject; but as an Honourable Friend of mine (Colonel Tarlton) who has made a very able defence of the trade, has asserted that the Petitions which have been presented from all parts of the kingdom, do not contain the general opinion of the people, or speak their sentiments, but that they have been obtained by artifice, and were undeserving of credit; I must beg leave to observe, that my Honourable Friend has adduced rather unsatisfactory evidence to prove, that the Petitions do not speak the voice of the country. I have had the honour to present a petition from my constituents, and I will venture to say, that there does not exist more respectable names in the kingdom than those of the persons who have signed that Petition. It has been said by my Honourable Friend, that there is a strong similitude in their tenor and substance. That is a circumstance, by no means to be wondered at. There is but one plain tale to tell, and it is not surprizing that it has been told in nearly the same manner and expressions. There is but one boon to ask, and that is the Abolition of the Slave Trade. The Petitions contain the sentiments of the people in general, and neither can they be invalidated, nor the evidence on the table be disproved, by the epistle of a Quaker at Warrington, or the letter of a Chester school-boy. The Honourable Gentleman who has brought forward the question, has been accused of enthusiasm; I am as warm an advocate for the Abolition of the Slave Trade as the Honourable mover of the question; but neither of them have started an idea of the Slaves being emancipated; they are as yet unfit for such a blessing. It is not for the emancipation of the Slaves, but for an Abolition of the Slave Trade, that they have contended. Is that a proof of enthusiasm or fanaticism, or is it a proof of a calm and rational investigation? That measures may be adopted for a gradual emancipation, as a Right Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Pitt) last year suggested, is, I am persuaded, the wish of every considerate man, and is the object that we have in view.—An Honourable Gentleman has said something

about two great orators, and men of distinguished abilities, having united their talents on the occasion, and who have given greater credit to the Honourable Gentleman who made the motion, by acceding to his opinion on the subject, than he merits. I do not believe, that the eloquence of the Honourable Gentleman has prevailed upon them to acquiesce in his opinion, but that the naked truth and simple justice of the subject, have induced them to support the question; and if any thing could yield additional weight to that of the conviction I entertain, that the traffic is inhuman and impolitic, it would be the circumstance of the two gentlemen in question, men of such eminent talents and brilliant abilities, and who are in habits of opposition to each other, uniting on the occasion, and contending for the Abolition of the trade; convinced as I am that that union is the consequence of the clearness of their minds, and the irresistible force of truth.—I trust, that those are not to be found who exult in the calamities that have recently occurred in St. Domingo. If such men exist, in my mind they merit exclusion from society, and ought to be driven from civilized life. For my own part, I disclaim all exultation on the subject. An Honourable Gentleman has declared, that those calamities are the first fruits of last year's Debate on the Slave Trade. I deny the assertion, and contend that they are the effect of the Trade itself. There is a point of endurance, beyond which human nature cannot go, at which the mind of man rises by its native elasticity with a spring and violence proportioned to the degree to which it has been depressed. The calamities in St. Domingo are the effect of the Slave Trade, and proceeded from no other cause; and if the trade continues, similar evils are to be apprehended in our West India Islands. The cruelties practised by the blacks in St. Domingo they have learned from their oppressive masters—
 “ Hath not an African eyes? Hath not an African hands, or
 “ gans, dimensions, senses, passions? Is he not fed with the
 “ same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same
 “ diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by
 “ the same summer and winter as we are? If you prick him,
 “ does he not bleed? If you tickle him, does he not laugh? If
 “ you poison him, does he not die? And if you wrong him,
 “ shall

“ shall he not revenge? If he is like you in the rest, he will resemble you in that. If an African wrong a white man, what is his humility?—Revenge. If a white man wrong an African, what should his sufferance be by our example? Why, revenge. The cruelty you teach him, he will execute.—But I fear it is not possible to better the instruction.”

Mr. VAUGHAN in reply to Mr. Whitbread. Perhaps I may not have expressed myself clearly, but I did not profess to speak as a Planter or Merchant, but as a Member of Parliament, and to give an independent opinion; even though, in some points, it may seem to make against the Colonists, who might not thank me now, but would hereafter.

Mr. MILBANK. With regard to the Abolition of the Slave Trade, the policy of the measure is as great as its justice is undeniable. Where slavery prevails, every operation that is performed, is done in a rude and unworkmanlike manner, and no substitute for manual labour, no artificial means of expediting work, alleviating its trouble, and shortening the time of finishing it, is introduced or thought of. Where slavery exists, there must be oppression, and in my opinion the Planters are bound to thank those who have warned them of the more than probable dangers that must one day ensue from the resentment of their Slaves, against those whom they cannot but regard with an inimical eye, and consider as their tyrants. I shall therefore certainly vote for the Motion.

Mr. DUNDAS. When this question was agitated in the House last year, I happened to be prevented by indisposition from giving any vote or public opinion upon it. My honourable friends, however, with whom I may be supposed to have the most intercourse, have very well known that I have long entertained the same opinion with them as to the Abolition of the Slave Trade, though I have differed from them as to the mode of effecting it.

I have

I have felt equally warm with themselves in the pursuit of the general object, and I feel so at the present moment; but I must consider how far it may be proper for me to give my assent to the particular proposition which is made by my Honourable Friend.

It is necessary I should state the ground on which I make this observation.

Such has been the manner in which the question has been hitherto argued by both parties; the one side seems to me to have gone so much into the extreme, as well as the other, that I (not judging exactly as either of them do) must consider how I am to shape my conduct.

One set of Gentlemen, the Honourable Mover and his supporters, have spoken without reserve, not only for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, but for an immediate and abrupt Abolition; those on the other side have unequivocally argued for the continuation of the African Slave Trade, as essentially necessary to the West Indian Islands; they have set no limits to the continuation of that trade, but laid it down as a proposition, that in order to maintain our commerce with the West Indies, the importation of new Slaves from Africa must be continued *for ever*. These are the two extremes into which the two parties have put themselves. Now, Sir, I agree with my Honourable Friend, as to the material parts of his argument. I am of opinion with him, that the African Trade is not founded in policy; I am of opinion with him, that the continuation of it is not essential to the preservation and continuance of our trade with the West India Islands; I am of opinion that there is no mortality in that quarter that is incurable, and that the human race may not only be maintained, but increased in the West India Islands. In all these great leading questions I concur with my Honourable Friend. It may then be asked, Do you not agree, then, to the Abolition of the Trade? I answer, that neither do I differ in this opinion. But the point of difference is this; I cannot help doubting as to the prudence or practicability of the mode of abolishing it, proposed by my Honourable Friend. If ever there was a heart purer than any other, if ever there was a man that acted upon the purest motives that ever can actuate

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human nature, I believe I may justly say that my Honourable Friend is that man; but still, with respect to the prosecution of his object, and the manner which prudence would suggest with a view to the practicability of it, he must excuse my stating that there is a shade of difference between us. When he talks of direct Abolition, I would submit to him whether he does not run counter to the prejudices and habits of life of those men who are most deeply interested in the question: I say prejudices of men *interested* in the trade, it is true; but surely, Sir, if it is possible to effect the same object without raising any extraordinary apprehensions on their part with respect to their great and important interests, it is more prudent to take that mode, and so to form the proposition, as to relieve their minds from the apprehension of injury. But farther, is my Honourable Friend perfectly sure, that in his zeal for one great object, he does not run counter to another equally important, I mean the sacred attention Parliament has ever shown to the interests of the public?

I believe, in cases where men have embarked themselves in employments, which have been afterwards considered to be abuses, and which have been of an *unlicensed* nature, it has ever been the custom of Parliament, in the correction of those abuses, to treat the persons with tenderness and compassion.

Whatever idea men may now have of the African Trade, certain it is, that those who have embarked their capitals in the cultivation of the West India Islands, and lent their money upon West India property, have done it not only under the sanction, but the solemn invitation of Parliament; undoubtedly Parliament may think it right to depart from any principle it has adopted again and again, as it appears upon your Statute Books to have often done; it may be wisdom to do it; but sure I am, it is your duty to recollect, in carrying your plans into execution, under what circumstances the property has been embarked, and whether you have invited the men to invest their money in those Islands.

I mean not to urge an argument which has been reprobated again and again in the course of this debate, that if we give up this trade, other nations will not give it up; our duty, I admit, does not depend upon the conduct of others. But there is another

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view in which I may make an observation on this subject. In case other nations take up the trade, may they not defeat the object of my Honourable Friend? May not British subjects in the West Indies be supplied by vessels from Eustatius or some other neutral port? What is to prevent an Ostend or Dutch merchant from carrying Slaves from Africa to the West India Islands? Gentlemen may make light of this argument, if they please; but I shall be glad to hear an answer to it. I state it in this view, and on this ground only.

It is my opinion, there is a possibility of avoiding these objections, and at the same time of not running directly contrary to the prejudices I have mentioned as existing in the minds of the West India merchants. It is in the shape of regulations only that we can totally abolish the African Slave Trade; and we shall thus do it not less speedily, nay, even more speedily, than in the manner which has been proposed.

I do not mean to say, let the trade continue for ever. In my main principle I am united with the Honourable Gentleman; but I repeat it, it is in the shape of regulations that I think you will procure the Abolition in the most direct manner.

Mr. Fox. To what regulations do you refer?

Mr. DUNDAS. To what regulations do I refer? In the first place, to regulations the most forcible and efficacious, in order to the increase and encouragement of the breed of native Negroes in the West Indies. Secondly, every species of *general* regulation, with a view of putting an end to hereditary slavery, and relieving the condition of the slaves. I allude also to regulations for the education of children, for informing their minds, and rearing them in the principles of religion and morality; a point that must greatly facilitate the total annihilation of the slavery of these children. Without such regulations as these, the Abolition of the African Trade would fail, in my opinion, of procuring the effects expected from it.

To those who contend that the cultivation of the Islands cannot be continued without a continuance of the Slave Trade, I

beg leave to say—Reflect on the *gradual* means I propose. Their object is gradually and experimentally to prove the practicability of the Abolition of the African Trade, and to provide the means of cultivation, to increase the population, and to prove that all the alarms are ill founded. As to the arguments of my Honourable Friend, and the Gentlemen opposite, great as their talents are, they are only founded on theory. Let them prove their theory with all the force of reasoning, and let their speculations be ever so splendid, it is still theory and speculation only; whereas, by the other method, you prove your point as you go on, and you rest the measure not upon theory, but on experience.

In mentioning the abolition of hereditary slavery in the Islands, I do not mean that the son of an African Slave should get his freedom by the death of the parent: but that being born free, he should be educated at the expence of the person importing his parents, and when arrived at such a degree of strength as may qualify him to labour, he should work for five or ten years, or whatever period it may be, for the payment of the expence of education and maintenance. It is impossible to emancipate the present Slaves at once; nor would their immediate emancipation be of any immediate benefit to themselves; but this observation does not apply to any of their descendants, if trained and educated in the manner I have suggested.

I differ—I hesitate much on the proposition of my Honourable Friend. My opinion has been always against the Slave Trade. I will not, therefore, vote against his Motion, however I may think proper to qualify it; but that will be matter for future consideration. If I give my assent to the Motion, it is an assent that leads to nothing but a general proposition, the mode of carrying which into effect may be settled hereafter. I do not adopt any one extreme in this question.

Permit me now to ask the indulgence of the House while I address myself to those who have maintained the other extreme, that it is absolutely necessary for the cultivation of the West India Islands to maintain an importation of African Slaves as usual. I entreat and solemnly conjure them to give a serious

consideration to that point. I apprehend they cannot think I assume too much when I say, that if both Slavery and the Slave Trade can be abolished with safety to their property, it deeply concerns their interest that the cultivation of their Islands should be by Freemen rather than by Slaves.

This general proposition, I take it for granted, nobody will controvert. I need not illustrate the proposition; look to the whole of the evidence before you on the state of those very Slaves. That they are ill used, I do not mean to lay to the charge of the West India Planters; I dare say some, who are not possessed of that general humanity which the rest of mankind have, may treat the Slaves ill. The Honourable Member who spoke to-night informs us, that the Planters are in general disposed to pay much regard to their slaves, and this from conscience, as well as from a principle of interest. I believe many respectable Owners in the West Indies take great care of their Negroes. But will not the same principle teach them how unseemly the cultivation by Slaves is, if it is possible to be effected by Freemen? And permit me to say, there would, in my opinion, be some inconsistency in the conduct of Parliament, if they should take measures for the Abolition of the Trade, without at the same time taking this under consideration also. Far be it from me—God forbid that I should limit the philanthropy of my Honourable Friends, or that I should entertain the smallest wish to insult the degraded shores of Africa. It is something anomalous that we, who are ourselves free, should carry on a Slave Trade with Africa; and it is something anomalous also that we, who enjoy the full benefits of freedom, should never think of introducing cultivation in the West Indies by Freemen, and not by Slaves.

I will here appeal to those Gentlemen who know it officially; I appeal to all the West Indians themselves, for the truth of what I am going to state; I appeal also to the Author of the History of Jamaica, I mean Mr. Long, and I ask whether there is any man who does not agree in the plain account given by that historian, that the great danger in the West Indies arises in reality from the importation of the African Slaves into

into the Islands? Mr. Long has mentioned it as a fact; and he wrote long before this question was in agitation, and not with any particular desire to abolish the African trade. He distinctly states, after referring his readers to the History of all the West India Islands, that all the insurrections arose from the imported Africans, and not from the Negroes born in the Islands. If this is true, permit me to remind the West Indians, how directly this observation bears upon the present question. But when we are also told by that author, that it is a trade destructive to the inhabitants of Africa, and that it gives rise to robbery, murder, and all kinds of abuses and depredations on the coast of Africa—has this also had any answer? No—except indeed that it is said, in defence of the trade, that those Slaves who are imported by us are all men condemned for crimes, and in consequence of the legal sentence of the law. Then I ask the same Gentlemen again, Are not the imported Africans, as Mr. Long also states, all the convicts, all the rogues, thieves, and vagabonds of Africa? I beg to ask, whether the West Indians chuse to depend on fresh supplies of *them* for the cultivation of their lands, and the security of their Islands, when it is also found that every insurrection has arisen from those very persons. It is plain, the safety of the West India Islands is concerned in this question. There will be danger of fresh struggles so long as an Abolition of this trade is refused. The West India Gentlemen are by these importations bringing upon the Islands the engines of their own destruction.

I now call upon them to give a serious consideration to the question, to consider whether they will not act more judiciously, and for their own interest, if they will concur in the opinion of putting an end to this trade, instead of standing up for the system of perpetual importations.

What right, Sir, have they to suppose that the coast of Africa is for ever to remain in its present state of barbarity? If once a Prince of an enlightened character should rise up in that hemisphere, his first act would be to make the means of carrying off all Slaves from thence impracticable. Is it then for the sake of such a precarious and temporary advantage that the present system is to be continued?

What reason have they to suppose the light of Heaven will never descend upon that continent? From that moment there must be an end of the present African Trade. The first system of improvement, the first idea of happiness that will arise in that continent, will bring with it the downfall of the African Slave Trade, and this in a more effectual way than if done by any regulations of this country. Let this suggest to them, that it is their own interest to contrive a mode of supplying labour without trusting to the importation of Slaves from Africa. They may rest assured the trade will not continue.

I do not allude to the Petitions in one way or the other. Perhaps the question does not acquire much additional force from them. Many of these may have been produced by anxious solicitations, and emissaries sent about; and many of those who signed them have not perhaps been very much versed in the nature of the question. They are desirous of obtaining the Abolition; but have not reflected whether the Trade should be abolished gradually or immediately. It is not upon the Petitions that I am desirous of founding any observations, but I wish to observe this, that the idea of the impolicy of the African Slave Trade has long been entertained by the most enlightened understandings of this country, as well as the idea that it is not founded in justice. It is the sentiment of a great body of people that it is not politic, and ought not to exist. It has made a deep impression on the minds of enlightened men in this country, that this trade is obnoxious to a thousand perils and dangers. If that is the case, is it a prudent thing to rest on that trade for the farther improvement and cultivation of their property? I really speak with a view to their own interest. I have so often seen imaginary apprehensions entertained on such subjects, that I am satisfied in a few years we shall see this question at rest, and that the West India Proprietors themselves will become of my opinion.

There was a species of slavery prevailing only a few years ago in some boroughs in Scotland. Every child that carried a coal from the pit, was the bound slave of that borough, and their emancipation was thought by Parliament to be material, and was very much agitated in the House. It was urged, that

let every man's genius be what it might, yet in those pits (the work from its nature being carried on underground) it was quite an excepted case, and without this principle of slavery the collieries could not be worked; that the price of coals would be raised to a most immoderate height, and all the neighbouring manufactories which depended on them would essentially suffer in their interests. After several years struggle, the Bill was carried through both Houses of Parliament. I am old enough to remember the dispute; within a year after, the whole idea of the collieries being hurt by the Abolition of this sort of Slavery, vanished in smoke, and there was an end of the business.

An Honourable Gentleman has also told you, which is another argument to the same point, that the regulation of the Middle Passage has had a salutary effect. Now, Sir, the present alarms are not more lively than those which were expressed when that Bill took place. The ruin of the Liverpool and Bristol trade was foretold. Yet now one of the Representatives comes forward and plainly tells you, "Our alarms were ill-founded, our apprehensions were without ground, we found fault with all your regulations, we ascribed every mischief to them, whereas we find by experience they have been attended with every benefit." Am I then asking too much when I ask for a candid consideration of the real grounds of the present apprehension? Perhaps the West Indians may find that the best thing they can do is to close in with my proposition, and that they will not act most wisely and prudently for themselves, in maintaining the continuance of the trade with Africa, as at all times necessary for the preservation, improvement, and cultivation of the West India Islands.

I am far from flattering myself that any thing I have said can at once totally eradicate prejudices that are deeply rooted, and bring over men to a set of altogether new ideas; but I mean to propose a moderate and a middle way of proceeding. If therefore there is any great body in this House, any respectable number of persons who are of opinion with me, that this trade must be ultimately abolished, but by *moderate* measures, which shall not invade the property of individuals, nor shock

too suddenly the prejudices of our West India Islands ; I say, if there is any great body of men of this opinion, I wish them to connect themselves together, and I will venture to say, that Gentlemen of that *moderate* or middle way of thinking may now reduce the question to its proper bounds, and maintain the principle of abolishing the Slave Trade in consistency with their other principles. I offer these few observations to their consideration.

Mr. ADDINGTON, Speaker—Sir, professing myself as I do to be one of those moderate men alluded to by the Honourable Gentleman who spoke last, and being of that *moderate* way of thinking, which he approves; I cannot forbear giving way to the impression made upon me, by his forcible manner of stating the argument.

In my mind no question ever came before this House, which deserved a more complete or serious investigation. Deeply considering the great importance of its object, I feel, and I have long felt, such a mode of treating it, as much to be desired, because I have believed, that it would facilitate the attainment of that great end, which I am sure every one would wish to be attained with as little injury as possible to private property: The fear of doing a fundamental injury to that extensive property has hitherto prevented me from giving an opinion against a system, the continuance of which, however, I could not prevail on myself to permit or countenance.

The Slave Trade I abhor ; but in the way the Abolition of it was proposed by my Honourable Friend, in the last year, I could not bring myself to adopt it, because I was persuaded, that the specific measure he offered to the House, would prove ineffectual to the accomplishment of its purpose: Nor, Sir, would I have it imagined, that I have taken up my aversion to this infamous system, merely from the inspection of those volumes of evidence on your table. No, Sir, it was upon those solid principles so eloquently and forcibly stated by the Honourable Gentleman who spoke last.

I remember, on its being once imputed to a noble and learned Lord, that has now been for some years retired from the Bench, when at an early period of his life he was employed against the Rebel Lords, that he had not used against them language sufficiently strong in proportion to their crime; he well answered, that he pitied the loyalty of that man, who imagined that any epithet could aggravate the *crime of treason*. And, Sir, I take leave to say, that I know no language which can add to the horrors of the *Slave Trade*. It is equal to every purpose of crimination to assert, that thereby *man is made subject to the despotism of man*; that *man is to be bought and sold*. I have felt, however, upon every occasion when this subject has been discussed, that I had a vast difficulty before me: on the one hand, it is impossible not to condemn the trade, and to recognize the claims of justice due to a whole continent on that side, and to that infinite multitude of persons whom it renders miserable; but, on the other hand, there are also *opposing claims of justice* on the part of the West Indians. There is a description of persons on that side, who, in like manner, have a strong claim that justice in their case should be attended to.

Many Gentlemen have adverted to the effects of abolishing the trade in part only, this being the whole consequence of its dereliction by this country. I own I should be disposed to consider this point very much as it has been considered by my Right Honourable Friend. The question is not so much, whether it would be carried on by this or that foreign country, but whether we should continue it under circumstances so very offensive as the present. But if no importation whatever is to take place, it has always appeared to me, that under the present circumstances of the West India Islands, an utter impossibility must present itself of maintaining the present stock: I mean that the number now in the islands is not sufficient for that purpose.

After the very able manner in which the whole of this extensive question has been argued to-night, I will not tread over the ground again; but it will be necessary for me to observe on some particular parts. It was forcibly argued, by my Honourable Friend who opened the Debate, that according to the disproportion of sexes which really has appeared, the supply of the Ne-

grows in future must be continually increasing, and that in a very few years all the difficulties will be entirely surmounted: I think that what he said, if conclusive with respect to Jamaica, did not apply to the circumstances of the other islands. Nor, Sir, does it appear to me, that the circumstance stated by my Honourable Friend is to be depended upon for furnishing so certain and effectual an increase of population, as a plan for providing the islands with a sufficient additional number of females.

There is now a total disregard among the Negroes to all religion and morality; and a mode of proceeding is therefore extremely necessary, which may tend to correct their morals by regulating their domestic life: and this, Sir, in time, would infallibly decrease the anxiety and fears of those under whose protection they are, and unite all more closely as members of the same society. But, circumstanced as they now are, they cannot rely upon them; and therefore some farther importation appears to me necessary, not only for their future supply, but also for their safety and comfort.

I own that, having seriously in my own mind revolved these considerations, I almost despaired of finding any Gentleman of sufficient weight in this House, and with the authority of an official situation, who would take upon himself the task of digesting and bringing forward a plan equal to the accomplishment of the great end proposed, the combination of true and rational humanity, with that substantial justice which is due to all the parties concerned.

The mode suggested by the Right Honourable Gentleman appears to me incapable of being altered to any considerable advantage, except indeed that my mind does not yet go to the point of granting liberty to the children born on the islands: and I should imagine that the trade might be permitted to exist for a few years longer, possibly eight, ten, or twelve, under such arrangements as should satisfy the minds even of those who contend for an immediate Abolition, by framing such regulations as should introduce a kind of management among the Negroes in the West Indies, favourable to their interests and security, and of course to their future happiness.

One species of regulation which I should propose will operate as a fountain of perpetual increase to their numbers ; I mean a greater encouragement to the importation of females than males, by means of a bounty on the former or by subjecting the latter to a heavier duty, which would act as a species of bounty till the natural equality of numbers shall be found to be restored.

As another mode of increasing population, something might be done in the way of giving land or money to those who should raise a certain number of children, and premiums to those who should find means of alleviating negro labour by machines for husbandry, or the substitution of cattle.

I never remember to have heard any scheme proposed before, analogous to this, which my Honourable Friend has now brought forward : and as, notwithstanding the intimate and unreserved communication which I have the pleasure to enjoy with him, it has never happened that this subject has been a topick of conversation between us ; I must therefore be ignorant of the extent of his ideas relating to it : yet I am persuaded he would not have offered his observations to the House without intending very speedily to submit to consideration some specific measure of substantial reform, and ultimate abolition, grounded on the plan which he has mentioned ; in which I should concur as thinking it likely to be attended with great advantages. At the same time I cannot but recollect on what ground this question has been argued by my Honourable Friend who moved it. I certainly have invariably wished the accomplishment of the same object with him, though I cannot but hope that his mode will not be adopted : I mean that of an immediate Abolition of the Slave *Trade*, as it is called ; though it certainly does not deserve that name. It is not a trade, and ought not to be continued. I am satisfied that in a very short period of years it will cease to be the reproach of this nation, and the torment of Africa. Wise and well digested regulations, by which it would very soon be utterly destroyed, would not only be productive of great benefit to this country, but would indisputably be peculiarly a blessing to the West India Islands. And I am confident

that they are as anxious as we can be to obtain this object; provided it can be obtained without any material injury to their essential interests.

I have now, Sir, very little more, with which to trouble the House. Had it not been, indeed, for the circumstance of my Honourable Friend, who spoke last, bringing forward a proposition so perfectly coinciding with my own sentiments, and which struck so forcibly on my mind, I should not, perhaps, have thought it necessary to have delivered my opinion in this debate.

As to my other Honourable Friend who introduced this business; I hope he will not regard any observations I have made, or what I am about to say, as meant personally to himself. But as he has fully explained his intention to be immediate abolition, though his motion does not absolutely express it, I cannot but think that it would have been dealing more fairly with the Committee to have inserted that idea in explicit terms. Being aware of his intention I cannot allow myself to support his motion: but I console myself with the hope, that a measure will very speedily be brought forward which I shall be able most cordially to support and approve.

The Right Honourable WILLIAM WINDHAM rose, but sat down again, perceiving Mr. Fox had also risen.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE CHARLES JAMES FOX.—

Although, Sir, what has been lately said by one Right Honourable Gentleman, must carry with it more weight than any thing I can offer on this subject, I do confess that while I was attending to him, I felt infinite uneasiness instead of any satisfaction: and I cannot help rising to express, that I have never heard a more severe or more efficacious resistance made to the Honourable Gentleman's motion. I do not mean to insinuate that the Gentlemen who so spoke were not serious—but something so much more mischievous has been said, and something so much more like a foundation has been laid for preserving,

serving, not only for years to come, but for aught I know, *for ever*, that detestable traffic, that I cannot excuse myself from stating with the utmost plainness the grounds upon which I act in this most important concern. I must with all the zeal and force of which I am master, deprecate all such deceptions and delusions upon the country. They may not be intentionally so: but I must call every thing deception and delusion, which may prevent the Committee from seeing the business in its true light—From seeing what alone is and must be the question,—*Whether this execrable Slave Trade, is fit to be continued, or must be abolished?*

The Honourable Gentlemen, call themselves *moderate men*; but upon this subject, I confess, I neither feel, nor desire to feel, any thing like the sentiment of moderation—Sir, to talk of moderation, upon this matter, reminds me of a passage in Middleton's Life of Cicero—there is one part defective, namely, the translation, but it is equally applicable to my present purpose; he says, “To enter a man's house and kill him, his wife, and family, in the night, is certainly a most heinous crime, and deserving of death. But to break open his house, to murder him, his wife, and all his children, in the night, may still be very right; *provided it is done with moderation.*”

This is absurd, I think, it will be said; and yet Sir, it is not so absurd as to say the Slave Trade may be carried on with moderation; for if you cannot break into a *single house*, if you cannot rob and murder a single man, with moderation; with what moderation can you break up a *whole country*? can you pillage and destroy a *whole nation*? Which, if it had sense and spirit to resist a publick injury, you could not—you would not dare, to do. Indeed—indeed Sir, in an affair of this nature, I do not profess *moderation!* Sir, I never could think of this abolition, but as a question of simple justice. It is only, Whether we should authorize by law, respecting Africa, the commission of crimes, for which, in this country, we should incur the severest penalties of the law; *and even forfeit our lives in the most ignominious form.* Notwithstanding which, the two Honourable Gentlemen think it a question to be treated with

moderation, pleading that moderation in arranging this robbery and murder, may be very proper and useful.

Bad as every proposition of this kind is, I should still have liked the present one better, if it had gone to any thing specifick—The last Right Honourable Gentleman, says the Slave Trade is a question, “ he cannot contemplate without horror;” and yet he will not give a vote for its immediate destruction. The other Gentleman says, “ He will not vote for its continuance;” but he is not entirely against it. Where is the proof they will *ever* vote for the abolition of it? May they not say the same thing, whenever you come to declare the time when that event is to take place? If they have any arguments to produce for it, provided any arguments can be urged in favour of murder and robbery, let them be brought forward; let them shew that that is law which exists in fact in the breach of every law; and let them then explain to us how such enormities can by any manœuvres be rendered fit and proper for the House to continue, for a few years, or even for a few days longer.

I will suppose, if you please, that the West India Islands are likely to want Slaves, on account of the disproportion of the sexes. How is this to be cured? A Right Honourable Gentleman proposes a bounty on an importation of females—or in other words, he proposes to make up this deficiency, by offering a premium to any crew of unprincipled and savage ruffians, who will attack and carry off any of the females of Africa!—*a bounty from the Parliament of Britain* that shall make the fortune of any man, or set of men, who shall kidnap or steal any unfortunate females from that continent! who shall bring them over as slaves, in order that they may be used for breeding slaves!—who shall kill their husbands, fathers, or relations, or shall instigate any others to kill them, in order that these females may be procured!—I should like to see the Right Honourable Gentleman *bring up* such a clause—I should like to see how his clause would be worded—I could like to know who would be the man who would dare to pen such a clause.

I, Sir,

1, Sir, for my part, complain throughout of the whole system on which this trade is founded; and I wish to expose the conduct of those who take credit to themselves by treating this subject as a *moderate* business. One Honourable Gentleman, the only person, I think, who has acted with fairness on that side of the question, declares that he resists us in our whole attempt, and says, the trade ought to go on for ever, and ought not to be abolished. In truth, Sir, I think that all those members who have spoken the most directly against the abolition, have made as much concession to us, in substance, though not perhaps in words, as these Honourable Gentlemen, who are for Gradual Abolition.

If we are to be satisfied with assertions, we ought to remember, that on last year's defeat, it was held out that some measure wou'd be speedily submitted to the consideration of the House—a whole twelve month, however, has passed, and no step has been taken. Gentlemen now come and declare, they are for abolishing the Slave Trade *gradually*—but I much fear, if it had not been for our renewal of the question, all those gradual measures, would not even have been named, and the Slave Trade would have been now quite undisturbed. For though so many Gentlemen seem to say, that adequate means ought to be used to bring about so desirable an end, they really hold out no means to this House, for carrying this end into execution. And when so large a part of this session has passed without our having heard of any intention of proposing those plans of moderation, what can I say? What opinion can I entertain, but that those ideas of regulation are only fit for the purpose of totally defeating the proposition of my Honourable Friend.

One Honourable Gentleman declares it to be his intention gradually to abolish the Slave Trade, by meliorating the state of the negroes in the Islands, and thereby rendering it unnecessary. But the Honourable mover of the business, says, with far more wisdom and practicability, " I will gradually produce the Abolition of Slavery, by immediately abolishing the *Slave Trade*—and I will never cease from prosecuting my plan

plan till the object shall be accomplished."—What says the other Honourable Gentleman? Does it appear probable, from the zeal and fervency he has hitherto shewn, that he will prosecute this scheme of West India reformation till there shall be ultimately an Abolition of the Slave Trade? He says, " I will not adopt this measure, because it seems an invasion upon property." But surely we may prohibit our subjects from committing crimes, without our being thereby chargeable with taking away the property of the West Indians: which last indeed is not *our* plan, but that of the Right Honourable Gentleman himself, who is not contented with taking the property, or rather the persons, of the Africans; but also proposes to take from the West Indians the slaves which are already theirs; and all this to shew his *tenderness for property!*

His proposed mode too, by which this abolition of slavery there is to be accomplished, is not a little curious. First of all, the children are to be *born free*; then to be educated at the expence of those to whom the father belongs.—The race of future freemen, he says, shall not be without education, like the present miserable slaves. But then it occurred to the Right Honourable Gentleman, that they could not be educated for nothing: in order, therefore, to repay this expence, says he, when educated, they shall be slaves for ten or fifteen years; and so we will get over that difficulty. They are to have the education of a freeman, in order to qualify them for being free: and after they have been so educated, then they shall go and be slaves.—But as this free education may possibly unfit them for submitting to slavery; so after they have been compelled to bow under the yoke of servitude for this term of ten or fifteen years, they may then, perhaps, be equally unfit to become free, and therefore may remain slaves, for a great number of years longer, or even for life.

Now, what can be more visionary than such a mode of education for the purpose of emancipation? — If any one scheme can be imagined more absurd than another, I think it is the one now proposed.

The Honourable Gentleman that introduced this motion, very properly says, "as this practice, which by a strange perversion of words is called the Slave *Trade*, ought indisputably to be considered as a most enormous crime, rather than a commerce; it is our duty to prohibit and punish the perpetration of it, even though it should not be in our power effectually to annihilate it."—No, says the Right Honourable Gentleman, for though I do not argue, as others have done that because the French, Spaniards, and Dutch will do it, that we are thereby justified in taking our share; yet as our colonies will get slaves by the means of these other nations if we abandon it, therefore we had better ourselves afford them the supply.

Now Sir, I, on the contrary, have no difficulty in saying, in the first place, that if they are to be supplied, I wish it to be by the French, Spaniards, and Dutch, or any other nation under Heaven, rather than by ourselves. But, again, does he think that we have no *external* power, no authority to prevent the importation of Slaves, when he *allows* us an *internal* authority; an authority with respect to the education of children, the emancipation of Slaves, and the Lord knows what?

Sir, the House begins to see that this trade is not consistent with justice, and they feel themselves unhappy at that sight. An honourable Gentleman who spoke early in the debate, acknowledged that many enormities were practised in it and were to be found in the evidence on your table; but, says he, would it be fair to take the character of this country, from the records of the Old Bailey?—I do not at all wonder, Sir, that when this subject was mentioned, the Old Bailey naturally occurred to his recollection: the facts which are described, are associated in all our minds with the ideas of *criminal justice*; but the Honourable Gentleman forgot the essential difference between the two cases. When we learn from the Old Bailey Records that crimes have been committed in this country, we learn at the same moment that they are *punished with transportation and death*—when we hear of these crimes committed in the Slave *Trade*, we find them passed

over with impunity—nay, we even see them rewarded, and the perpetrators going out again under the same masters to commit more.

There has been an accusation against the Committee which sat in the Old Jewry, for having distributed copies of the evidence ; I had the honour of being one of that Committee, though perhaps from other avocations, not a very constant attendant ; my advice was to distribute them as largely as could be done : *for I do heartily wish, that there should not be a man in this nation who can read, but should see the evidence before the House.* I am sure Sir, it would produce on the country that effect, which I trust it will ultimately upon the House of Commons, and ensure an immediate Abolition.

In disparagement of some of those who had given their testimony, it is objected to them by one Honourable Gentleman, that they were, many of them, *poor people*. Why Sir if they have poverty, they may have veracity.—I do not know but these two things may go together. The Honourable Gentleman, however, took special care to inform us, that his veracity was not to be objected to, on that score ; and I believe it is not, but if his circumstances had been like theirs, I dare say he would have deemed his own evidence, as credible, and as fit to be received.—Then he brought against them the evidence of Lord Rodney, Lord Macartney, Admiral Edwards, Admiral Arbuthnot, &c. &c. &c. whose characters as commanders I revere. But have *they* said any thing about the Slave Trade ? Have they even told you that they have ever *seen* the coast of Africa ? Do they know any thing of the Slave Trade, except from the same source, which every Gentleman in this House has it in his power to resort to—the Evidence upon our table ? They have spoken of nothing but of the *West Indies*. I am not aware they have had any intelligence from Africa upon the subject ; and I ask would it not then be thought a shuffling trick of a counsel, if he were to take the testimony of those men because they are Lords or great people, to the disparagement of the evidence of poorer persons ? when the testimony

testimony of these last is directly to the point in question, and that of the great Lords is on a subject *altogether separate and distinct*. Besides all that these great men have said, is at best *negative*, and every thing which has been advanced by the others is *positive* and remains uncontradicted.

As to the mode of procuring Slaves, even the honourable Gentleman near me (Col. Tarlton) has not ventured to say that it has *any thing like fairness* in it. I think the least disreputable way of accounting for the supply of Slaves, is to represent them as having been convicted of crimes, by legal authority. Now, Sir, if the number of them proves on inquiry, to be such that it is impossible to believe they have been all guilty even of any crime whatever, much less of crimes deserving so great a punishment as perpetual Slavery, this pretence sinks into nothing, and the very urging it, only disgraces those who can satisfy themselves with defending a practice so execrable, on grounds so futile, and by a supposition so absurd. What does the House think is the whole number of these *convicts* exported annually from Africa?—**EIGHTY THOUSAND**. But I will grant, if you will, that it is Britain alone that takes all her *convicts*, and that the Slaves taken by other nations are not *convicts*, but are carried off by shameful fraud and violence. Britain alone, I will suppose, is so scrupulous, as to receive none that have not legally forfeited their liberty, leaving all the fraud of the Slave Trade to other countries. Britain, even on this supposition, takes off no less than **THIRTY OR FORTY THOUSAND** annually of African *Convicts*! Now, Sir, is it credible—is it possible for us to persuade ourselves, that even this number can have been legally convicted of crimes, for which they have justly forfeited their liberty? The supposition is ridiculous.

But *even allowing* all these men to have been condemned to slavery by due legal process, and according to the strictest principles of justice; surely Sir, in this view, it is rather *condescending* in this country, and rather new also for us, to take on ourselves the task of transporting the *convicts* of other parts of the world, much more of those whom we call *barbarous*! Suppose now, the court of France or Spain were to intimate a wish

that we should perform this office for *their* criminals—I believe we should hardly find terms that could be strong enough to express our sense of the insult—But for *Africa*—for its petty states—for its lowest and most miserable criminals, we accept the office with satisfaction and eagerness !

Now, Sir, a word or two as to the specific crimes for which the Africans are sold as criminals—*Witchcraft* in particular is one.—Of this we entertain so sacred a horror, that there being no objects to be found at home, we make, as if it were, a crusade to Africa, to shew our indignation at the sin!—As to *Adultery*, to be sure, this does not stand exactly on the same ground.

Adulterers *are* to be met with in this country—but then this crime is, I suppose, *so common* here, that we know not whom to single out for punishment from among the number. Determined, however, to shew our indignation of this crime also, we send to *Africa* to punish it. We there prove our anger at it to be not a little severe—and, lest Adulterers should any where in the world escape punishment, we degrade ourselves, even in Africa, to be their executioners.

Thus, Sir, we send to Africa to punish *witchcraft*, because there are *no witches* to be found here; and we send to the same country to punish *Adultery*, because the Adulterers here are *too many* to incur punishment.

Let the House remember too that what I have here stated is, even by their own account, the *very best* state of the case which the advocates for the Slave Trade have pretended to set up.

But let us now see, how far *facts* will bear them out even in these miserable pretexts. In one part of the evidence, we find a well known Black Trader brings a girl to a Slave ship to be sold—The Captain buys her.—Some persons come on board afterwards and find out who she is—They learn who the trader is that sold the poor girl—and they go and catch *him*; bring him to the same ship and sell *him* for a Slave.—What says the Black Trader to the Captain? “Do you buy *me* grand trader?” “Yes says the Captain, I will buy you or any one else—If they will sell you, I’ll buy you.” Now, Sir,

there

there is great reason for dwelling on this story ; certainly at the first view, it appears to be an instance of the most bare-faced villainy, and of nothing else. But if we examine well into the subject, we shall see that what happened in this case is, and ever must be, the common and ordinary conduct, that results from the very nature and circumstances of the trade itself. How could this Captain decide ? What means had he even of inquiring who was the real owner of this girl ? Whether of the grand trader or not ; or who was the owner of the grand trader ? The Captain said when they sold the trader, the same thing which he said when the trader sold the girl, and the same thing too, which he always had said, and always must say, and which *all Slave Captains* must say—namely—“ I cannot know who has a right to sell you—it is no affair of mine—If they'll sell you, I'll buy you—I cannot enter into these controversies.—If any man offers me a Slave, my rule is to buy him, and ask no questions.” That the trade is in fact carried on in this manner, is indisputable ; and that wars are made in Africa, solely for the purpose of supplying the European Slave Trade, is equally so. *Is there any man that denies it ? I do not believe a single Gentleman in this committee will now dare to controvert so well established a fact ;* and it is for this reason, I shall not mispend your time in adducing additional proof.

I will now enter into some particulars relative to what happened in the river Camaroon, already stated to you by the Honourable Gentleman. This affair came out upon an action tried before the Court of Common Pleas, on the first of March last, before Lord Loughborough. It was brought by one M'Dowal against Gregson and Co. for wages due to the Plaintiff. The facts were directly in issue, so that by this strange concurrence of events, you have what you could hardly have expected :—You have a *judicial proof* of the whole transactions ; containing among others, the following important circumstances : A Chieftain, of the name of Quarmo, who meant to execute his revenge upon the Slave Captain for the savage violence which the Captain had before committed, goes to him, and says, “ I want to

go up the country to make trade, if you will help me by giving me some arms and gunpowder." The proposal is at once agreed to. Now, Sir, as the Chief *meant to deceive* the Captain, when he asked for these arms and gunpowder, we may be very sure he would use just that sort of art, which would be most *likely to* deceive him—he would not make a proposition of any extraordinary kind, that might alarm the Captain's suspicions—the reason he would pretend would be the most usual, and common, and natural, he could think of. His plea, therefore, of borrowing arms to make *trade*, (alias *war*, for *trade*,) was the *natural* plea, and for this reason it succeeded. It was so usual, so much the every day's practice, that the Slave Captain immediately consented as it were *through habit* to the request, which he tells you himself, he had often granted before; and through the success of this fraud, his destruction was accomplished. In short, Sir, I again and again call on any man to shew me, how this trade can be carried on, but by such means, that if a man were to practise the same in this country, he would justly be *punished with death*.

But, Sir, we are accused of enthusiasm. Are we then fanatics? are we enthusiasts, because we cry, Do not rob, Abstain from murder? I have ever considered this business as a most unjust and horrible persecution of our fellow creatures. But I am told I must be under some impression of enthusiasm. If by that expression be meant zeal and warmth, I freely acknowledge it; I glory in it. Enthusiasm, when it arises out of a just cause, is that which makes men act in it with energy. It is that without which nothing great was ever done since the creation of the world. Enthusiasm of this sort I hope therefore I shall always possess, it was what in this case we pride ourselves in, we glory in it. And, Sir, this being as I have said, *a cause of justice*, it is one in which I cannot admit of any compromise: or there can be no compromise between Justice and Injustice.

An Honourable Member has said it would have been fairer in the Gentleman who moved the question, if he had expressed in

in the terms of it the full extent of his own meaning. Though the words of the motion do not say *immediate* Abolition, he did I think most clearly and openly declare his intention was immediately to abolish ; and to the motion itself there is no fair objection on this ground. He has drawn the motion, agreeably to the forms of the House, and with perfect good sense, in my opinion. He says, " When I bring in my bill, I mean to let it be open to amendment ;" it is however reasonable for us to expect, that the Honourable Gentleman will himself wish to have the blanks filled up in the manner that is most correspondent to the feelings of his own mind upon the subject.

What then is the precise question now before the Committee for their consideration ? The question before you, Sir, is only " whether this House is ready now to say, that the Slave Trade shall be abolished, and this *at any time*." Some Gentlemen may be for its being abolished in six years, some may be for its being abolished in twelve ; some in six months ; but all who are for the Abolition *at all*, ought indisputably to vote for this motion. When we come into the Committee on this bill, any Honourable Gentleman may then move a short period. I say it ought to be abolished *immediately*. Others may think it ought to be two, three, six, ten, or twenty years ! I own I think they might as well propose a thousand. But by this motion as it now stands, they will have an opportunity of naming what term they please, and they ought therefore to vote now with us, if they mean to abolish *at all*.

But mark the conduct of the Right Honourable Gentlemen.—Notwithstanding they declare themselves friends to the Abolition, they will, by the conduct they seem now about to follow, give additional weight and strength to that majority which decided against the Abolition last year. By the course which I propose they would put an end to that majority. I was in hopes they would have done something, though it should be ever so small, towards forwarding the object : but these hopes entirely fail me,

I have

I have been both sorry and ashamed to hear a Right Honourable Member of so much weight and authority as the Gentleman I allude to, profess to us, that, "he had never yet delivered any opinion on so important a subject as this is." Surely, Sir, when the chair of the Committee was filled by an Honourable Baronet, who so properly and worthily now fills it, and when that Right Honourable Member was thereby left at liberty to speak and vote upon the question, the Committee had some right to expect the benefit of his judgment and abilities; and I think the Right Honourable Gentleman himself must have felt humiliated, at having to go uselessly out of the House, or to run behind the Chair, without giving any opinion or assistance whatever in the decision of a question of such magnitude; a question also in which the plainest principles of justice, and the dearest rights of humanity are so involved.

Another Right Honourable Gentleman has said, "in a little time we shall find that this trade will be abolished." I believe so too. The criminality of it is more seen, and this will abolish it. Petitions have been presented to this House which cannot be resisted; and the public (who have been enlightened by the evidence and the publications of the society in the Old Jewry) have shewn a solicitude and zeal on this subject, which cannot fail of accomplishing their object.

Sir, I have been long enough in Parliament to have seen petitions on a variety of occasions presented to this House, and I do not know upon what principle you can speak lightly of them, as one Honourable Gentleman has done, unless you can bring actual evidence of improper practices; unless you can prove for instance, that some names have been forged, or some fraudulent means used to obtain signatures.

The Honourable Gentleman says he has two letters to shew that to some of these there are false names. How does he know the letters themselves are not false? How does he know the signature to that letter, which purports to be written by a school-boy at Chester, is not as fictitious as he states the petitions to be? If he can prove it was not the petition

petition of those whose names are signed to it, let it be proved. But, Sir, it is perfectly ridiculous to suppose that such a number of petitions from all parts of the kingdom could have been fabricated. If they were, why then have we not as many fabricated for the preservation of the trade, as for the abolition? "So we might," says the Honourable Gentleman, "but the people *on our side* of the question could not *condescend* to use such means." If any Slave Traders, or Captains of slave ships, could any where have been found capable of degrading themselves so far as to sign false names to petitions, or to ask others to sign them on false representations, we might in this way of reasoning have had our table equally heaped with petitions on their side of the question. No, Sir, the reason why we have none of their petitions, is, that the detection would have been easy; and it must be equally easy if the petitions are mere forgeries *on our side* of the question: and if the Honourable Gentleman really can find, among all the Slave Captains whom he knows, none who are equal to such practices as these, I give him joy *on his connections*, for he must be connected with very conscientious Guinea Captains indeed!

It has been urged that we have no occasion to adopt these violent measures in order to put an end to the Slave Trade, for it will soon come to a natural period by the gradual civilization of Africa. Sir, it is impossible; as long as this accursed trade exists there can be no civilization; scarcely a step towards it; while we continue thus to excite men to war and every species of villainy, can there be any civilization in a country, or any thing that can tend to make its inhabitants happy? Here is the very refinement of our cruelty. We create every kind and degree of immorality; we ourselves render the people savages, and then we say, "those men are so savage, that it is bettering their condition "to transport them as slaves to the West Indies."

We have heard the miserable heart-rending tale of those horrid scenes which have passed in St. Domingo: doubtless the revolted negroes have thore committed devastations and murders, of which the very relation makes a man shudder with

with horror. But where did these Blacks *learn* this cruelty ? Who *instructed* them to be brutal and ferocious ? They have learnt it, Sir, from civilized Europeans, and they have learnt it in the West Indies : they gained their instruction from those who had tyrannized over them, and from their own masters ; the oppression practised on themselves was in their remembrance, and we may assure ourselves this has caused them to wreak their vengeance with such fury. Can any man wish our Islands to be in a like situation ? would you expose them to similar situations ? or would you take the means of preventing it ? Stop the farther importation of slaves,—do not add to the number of *those slaves in particular* by whom these outrages have been chiefly committed. Even Mr. Long's history of Jamaica points out the probable benefits of such a prohibition. Nor does the good effect of the measure of Abolition, even upon our Islands, end here. Besides lessening most materially the danger of insurrections like that of St. Domingo, it will lead to a melioration of the condition of the present slaves there, by easy and obvious means ; to mild and gentle treatment from their masters, which so far from diminishing, will rather increase their real power and authority. When this happy change of system shall have arrived, you will be able to depend on the Creole Blacks for the defence of their country, as much as on the Whites themselves.

But it is said, " Why are we to be so very attentive to the inhabitants of Africa, and yet not enter into the question of regulating the present system of slavery in the West Indies. Why are we to be so tender of the African Blacks, and yet have no tenderness for those in our own islands ? " Sir, I deny that I ask for any *tenderness* to the people of Africa. I only say, do not rob and murder them to gratify your avarice. Is this asking for tenderness ? And as to the slaves in the West Indies, I do feel every thing for them. I do say, that the slavery, even of a person brought up and bred in it, is much to be pitied. This, however, is far less grievous than the slavery of an imported African. To be the slave of the

man that brought him up, and in the same country where he was born, is quite a different thing from a man's being forced from his own country into slavery, torn from his friends, deprived of that freedom which he has enjoyed till he was grown up, and made to work, contrary to all his former habits, under the whip of a driver, in a new quarter of the globe.

Anxiously, however, do I desire to alleviate the misery also of those unhappy slaves already in the West Indies ; but as to the mode of doing it, and as to the right we may have to make regulations on that subject, all this is a separate consideration. But to argue for regulations in the islands to be previously made by us, as the best means of abolition--to argue for this slow, and doubtful, and circuitous way of abolishing the trade, when we can do it in a direct way and instantly, is in other words to say, " Do not do a thing which you are quite able and competent to do, till you have by degrees effected another thing, which other thing you are not competent, and perhaps not able to do at all ! "

Sir, I now come to that which I consider really as the foundation of the whole business. The more I think on the subject, the more I reflect on all the arguments, miserable as they are ! which our adversaries bring forward in their defence ; the more am I convinced that there is one ground, and only one ground, on which it is possible for their side of the question to stand. It is an argument which they did resort to at the first, which they have not used to day ; but which really, Sir, if I were to advise them, they should again resort to, and rest their whole case upon it. I mean that there is a *difference of species*, between black men and white, which is to be assumed from the *difference of colour*. Driven as our antagonists have been from this ground, and ashamed of it as they now are, they really have no other. Why, Sir, if we can but establish that blacks *are men* like ourselves, is it possible that we can have any patience on this subject ? Apply the same case to France, which is happening every day in Africa ; the

difference, in fact, is only *in the colour of the people of the two countries.*

There exists now in France (or in several of its provinces) a very great degree of animosity ; and there are two contending parties—I believe indeed the accounts are much exaggerated—But let us suppose now, that at Marseilles, for instance, or some other port, the Aristocrates were to sell the Democrats as fast as they could catch them ; and the Democrats were to sell the Aristocrates in like manner, and that we had ships hovering on the coast, ready to carry them all off as slaves to Jamaica, or some other island in the West Indics. If we were to hear of such a circumstance, would it not strike us with horror ? What is the reason ? Because these men are *of our own colour.* There is no other difference in the two cases whatever.

I will quote, on this point, one of the antients, by way of proving the same thing—no less a genius than Aristotle—He, wishing to establish some ground of defence for slavery says, “ *The Barbarians are of a different race from us, and were born to be slaves to the Greeks.*” Now, Sir, if any better reason could be found out in justification of slavery, I should think that most fertile genius would have been the first to discover it. He saw domestic tyranny exercised in an extreme degree, and this in states where political tyranny was not suffered—He asked himself the reason, and after he had searched his wonderful invention (finding slavery to be the *practice* of his country, and not wishing to condemn it) he could resort to no other argument than that of saying, “ *the Barbarians are inferior to the Greeks by nature ;*” because, forsooth, the Greeks had had strength to conquer them. It is true, many of these Barbarians were *of the same colour* with the Greeks ; still, however, it was necessary to establish a *distinction* in the *nature* of the different men, in order to assign any real reason for permitting the difference in their *treatment.*

As to setting up any distinction of nature between people of our *own colour* ; it is what no man now will bear to hear of ; to say there are any Whites of an inferior species, marked

out by nature to be Slaves to other Whites, is not to be borne ; it would fill us all with horror to authorize slavery any where, on this ground, with respect to white men : and is it not quite as unjust, because some men are black, to say there is a natural distinction as to them ; and that black men, because they are black, ought to be slaves ? Set aside difference of colour, and is it not the height of arrogance to allege that because we have strong feelings and cultivated minds, it would be great cruelty to make slaves of *us* ; but that because *they* are yet ignorant and uncivilized, it is no injury at all to *them* ? Such a principle once admitted, lays the foundation of a tyranny and injustice that have no end.

Mention has been made of some great hardships suffered on board the transports to Botany Bay, by which a large portion of the convicts perished ; and I am afraid indeed the business was attended with dreadful circumstances. The story, however, may appear less extraordinary to some of us, when we know that the transportation was undertaken by *Slave Merchants*, and conducted by a *Slave Captain*. I understand, a part of the misery is attributed to his having used slave fetters, instead of those usually worn by convicts. That any *mere felons* should have been conveyed to the place of their banishment under circumstances of equal cruelty with *slaves* from Africa, is certainly, Sir, a disgrace to this country, and it ought to constitute a charge against those persons concerned in so scandalous a business ; and I hope and understand it will be so considered by Government.

I remember to have once heard, or read, long before the present questions were agitated, a well known story of an African who was of the first rank in his own country and a man of letters. He was taken in one of those plundering wars, which the Slave Trade gives occasion to ; was carried to Maryland, and sold as it happened to a remarkably humane and very excellent master. His master inquired into the case, found out that he was educated in the Mahometan religion, that he could read and write Arabic, that he was a man of rank as well as literature, and all the circumstances

being taken into consideration, he was after a full examination of facts, redeemed and sent home to Africa.—Now, Sir, if this man with all his advantages, had fallen into the hands, I do not say of a hard hearted, but even an ordinary master; would he not inevitably have worn out his life in the same Egyptian bondage, in which thousands of his fellow Africans drag on their miserable days? Put such cases as these home to yourselves, and you will find the Slave Trade is a thing not to be justified, not to be tolerated for a moment, for the sake of any convenience whatsoever.

As to danger from the want of population in the Islands, even this pretext has been completely done away by the Right Honourable the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and it is remarkable, that though he was at the pains of going fully into those calculations, insomuch, that I really thought him too condescending in that detail; there has not been the least attempt to controvert any of his statements. Not a single calculation of his has been gone into, by any one of the Gentlemen who are against the Abolition of the Trade.—I might complain of want of respect to the Right Honourable Gentleman, from this silence; but the fact I know is, that not the shadow of an answer could be given; and yet so it is, that Gentlemen refuse to be convinced!

Upon the whole, I shall give my opinion of this traffick in a very few words. I believe it to be impolitic—I know it to be inhuman—I am certain it is unjust—I think it *so* inhuman, that, if the plantations could not be cultivated without it, upon the principles of humanity and justice, they ought not to be carried on at all. Even if the objects of it were brute animals, no *humane* man could expose them to be treated with such wanton cruelty. If the merchandize were totally inanimate, no *honest* man could support a trade founded upon such principles of injustice. Upon these grounds, there is every necessity for putting an immediate end to it.

I think the Honourable Gentleman has made precisely the most proper motion in this stage of the business. It confines the House to nothing, provided they are friends to the Abolition,

tion, either immediate or future. He has told you his ideas, and those who differ from him as to time, may propose their's. Let us rescue Parliament from the degrading situation in which they stand at present, of having given their sanction to this trade. Many Gentlemen feel the burden, and are desirous of being relieved from it. Let us do our duty, and remove this opprobrium from ourselves ; and if other countries follow our example, so much the better ; if they do not, let us glory in leaving them behind, let us shew them that Great Britain deserves to stand as high in the opinion of the world for her justice, as I know she does already for her wisdom, for the superiority of her constitution, and for the excellency of her laws, which excite the admiration of surrounding countries. But, Sir, I can have no doubt, that the example which we shall set in abolishing the Slave Trade will have a great effect, certainly greater than that of any other country in Europe. What is the present situation of France with respect to her colonies ? It is critical and peculiar. One day they talk of Liberty and are inclined to favour the Negroes ; another day they check themselves and suspend their measures. It is the timid wavering conduct which the National Assembly was prevailed on to adopt, in preference to bold and resolute measures, that has produced all the dreadful mischiefs at St. Domingo.

These, Sir, are the cruel consequences of *moderate* measure. Decision had been mercy ; decision even against the prejudice of their West India Planters, would have been a thousand times better for those Planters, than indecision and half measures.

But there are some persons who are fond of throwing out, that our Islands will not submit to the Abolition of the Slave Trade, that they will say, " We cannot, we will not suffer it, and we must seek out some other connection." To this, I very freely answer, " If you chuse to be protected by us, who are best able to do it, we will protect you, and we think we can render you more service than any other country ; but if you are to be connected with us, IT MUST BE ON THE

PRINCIPLES OF JUSTICE. If Britain must involve herself in this dishonourable, this bloody business, for the sake of the Islands ; if these are your terms, let the connection cease from this moment.

Perhaps, Sir, there is less boldness than there appears to be in stating this so strongly, for I am well persuaded, that our West India Islands too well know the superior advantages of their present connection, to break with us on this ground ; I am well convinced they will say to us, “ Though you abolish the Slave Trade you shall not drive us away from you : to you we must still adhere, our habits, our feelings, and what is more our *interests*, incline us to prefer your connection to that of any other country. Though you shake the Slave Trade off from us, you shall never shake us off from you.” But if they should not say this, and if the question be, whether Britain shall retain the Slave Trade and the West India Islands, or shall part with them both together ; I do not hesitate a moment in deciding which alternative she ought to take ; I declare at once, “ BETTER BE WITHOUT THE ISLANDS THAN NOT ABOLISH THE SLAVE TRADE.” Let us therefore, this night, act the part which will do us honour ; let us vote for bringing in a bill for the abolition. If we fail, which I confess I have some apprehension of, I have only to express my gratitude to the Honourable Gentleman for the part he has taken. He does not need my exhortation to persist ; but this will I declare, that whether we vote in a small minority or large one, “ *We never will give up the point.*” Whether in this House, or out of this House ; in whatsoever situation I may ever be ; as long as I have a voice to speak, *this question shall never be at an end* : if it were possible that the Honourable Gentleman could entertain the idea of abandoning it, I would not.

But Sir, even if all those who are engaged in this question were to be removed away, there would never be wanting men alive to their duty who *would cry out for justice*, who would maintain a perpetual struggle, till this Trade should be done away.

We who think that these things are not merely *impolitic* but *inhuman* and *unjust*; that they are not of the nature of *trade*, but that they are *crimes, pollutions, which stain the honour of a country!* We, Sir, will never relax our efforts.

We wish to prevent *man from preying upon man*; and we must do our duty, let the world think of us as they may. And I possess the fullest confidence that our perseverance will ensure success.

One word more: never let this subject be confounded with any ideas of *political slavery*. Were I a member of an Arbitrary Government, where the will of the Prince alone was law, I should be as zealous to wipe off such a stain as this from that country, as I now am to do it from our own. What means Slavery? A Slave is one whom another man commands at his pleasure: who belongs not to himself, but to his master, at whose disposal he is in all respects; this is *personal slavery*. Political slavery is but a metaphor; it has got the name from its bearing only some faint resemblance to slavery, literally so called. It has been named Political Slavery, with a view of exciting somewhat of that same horror against it, which Personal Slavery is known always to excite. Few men, I believe, carry their ideas of Political Freedom higher than I do; but although I cannot help thinking the People of France under the old Despotick Government were enslaved in one sense; yet their state when compared with Personal Slavery, was a state of perfect Freedom. Nor is the difference between any two the most distant degrees of Political Slavery and Freedom, to be put in competition with the difference between every individual slave and free man. Let us never again, therefore, let our understandings be insulted by confounding two things so totally different.

I have not again read to the House, this day, any of those shocking accounts, with which I troubled them last year. But I repeat "*They are upon evidence! They stand on unquestionable authority!*" And if any Gentleman has neglected to attend to these cruelties, they nevertheless exist.

But neither are these stories necessary to my argument. If the situation of the Negroes were as happy as servitude could

could make them, I must not commit the enormous crime of selling man to man ; nor permit a practice to continue which puts an entire bar to the civilization of one whole quarter of the habitable globe. Many years will not be given us to discuss this subject. *This nation will not long permit the constant commission of crimes that shock human nature, for the sake of the West Indies.* And if the West India Gentlemen will insist on the continuance of such a trade, they must not expect to be very popular in this country. *They have NO RIGHT to demand that crimes shall be permitted by this country for their advantage.* And the advice I give them is, that they should give up these ideas, and lend their cordial assistance to such measures as may bring about, in the shortest possible time, an abolition of a traffick, for which not one reason can be given, that is consistent with policy, humanity, or justice.

MR. ADDINGTON, to explain—The Committee will do me the honour to recollect, that what I have stated in favour of gradual, rather than immediate abolition, was on the principle of securing the property of individuals: I did not conceive that the present state of the West Indies would admit of our abolishing this trade immediately.

As to what the Right Honourable Gentleman has said of giving a bounty on the importation of females, I mentioned certainly, that I thought a duty might be laid on imported negroes, which should be lighter on the females, than on the males. I admit this must operate in effect as a bounty on the women imported. If a sufficient supply of negroes can be raised the Islands, I wish no such distinctions should be made.

With respect to the means of carrying the regulations in the West Indies into execution, which the Right Honourable Gentleman thinks is a very nice point ; the mode that has occurred to me is, that an address should be presented

rented to His Majesty, that he would be graciously pleased to direct certain regulations to be proposed by the Governors of the West India Islands.

I cannot help thinking that that moderation which has been recommended by my Right Honourable Friend, is the only way in which we can secure our object, or do ourselves honour in the eyes of the world.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE HENRY DUNDAS.—Conceiving that some misconception may, perhaps, arise from my voting with my Honourable Friend, in his motion as it now stands, I rise to move an amendment to it; which is to insert the word, *gradually*, before the words, “ to be abolished.” The motion will then be, “ That the Slave Trade ought *gradually* to be abolished.”

MR. JENKINSON.—I feel a considerable degree of regret, when I differ from those with whom I am in the habit of acting; but I should think I was acting inconsistently with that duty which I owe my CONSTITUENTS and my country, if after having formed a *decided opinion* on so *great and important a question* as that which is now before the House, any motives whatever should prevent me from delivering that opinion, and from supporting it with such arguments as may appear to me *decisive* on the subject.

In rising to oppose the propositions that have been made, I feel that I labour under every possible difficulty. I rise not only to oppose a measure, generally believed to be popular, but which has been supported by a greater combination of abilities than was ever united on any one subject, on which a difference of opinion could reasonably exist. Feeling, as I do, my own inability to contend with the Right Honourable Gentleman

who spoke last, all that I can do is, to call the attention of the House, as briefly as possible, to what I conceive to be the real state of the question; and I hope that the Committee will be influenced in their decision, rather by the weight of argument, than by any ingenuity or eloquence with which it may be supported.

The opinions of those who are adverse to the abolition, have in general been unfairly stated. It has been circulated that their opinion is founded on principles of *policy*, as opposed to principles of *humanity*—on no such ground am I disposed to resist the abolition. If it can be clearly made out that the interests of humanity are decidedly in favour of the proposition, Heaven forbid that any motives of policy should prevent our adopting it! But if, on the contrary, it should appear, that the Cause of Humanity is, *in fact, against the Abolition*, I trust then that the very same principles which would in the one case have induced the Committee to adopt the proposition, will then induce them to unite with me in opposing it.—I desire, however, to be understood, when I say that the cause of *humanity* is against the Abolition. The question is not, whether the trade was *originally founded in injustice and oppression*. I admitted it was—The question is not, whether the trade is *abstractedly in itself an evil*. I admit it to be so—But whether, under all the circumstances of the case, any considerable advantage would arise to a number of our fellow creatures, from the abolition of the trade taking place in the manner in which it has been proposed.

The subject, from the manner in which it has been treated, naturally divided itself into three points of view.

1. The situation of the Negroes on the coast of Africa.
2. Their situation in the Middle Passage.
3. Their situation in the West-India islands; and how far, in each of these respective situations, their condition is likely to be benefited by the measure which has been proposed.

Disposed as I may be, not to agree to the statement that has been made, of the situation of the Negroes in Africa, it is not my intention to rest any argument on that ground.

I am

I am ready to admit that their situation is miserable, that their miseries are in a great measure occasioned by the Slave Trade, and that if that trade was universally abolished, very great benefit will consequently accrue to the inhabitants of Africa. No person will, however, pretend to assert, that whatever may be the calamities suffered by the inhabitants of that continent, *those calamities arise from the trade, as carried on by Great Britain only.* Other countries must, of course, occasion as much of those evils as we do; and if the abolition of the trade on our part should prove only the *transfer* of it into the hands of those countries, very little benefit could accrue to the Negroes from our humanity.

What, then, is the probability of our example being followed by those countries who have a considerable share in the trade? Five years have now elapsed since the disposition of a considerable part of this country has manifested itself in favour of the abolition. Sufficient time, then, has been given, to enable us to judge whether other countries are likely to second our efforts.

Have the Portuguese shewn any disposition to follow our example? Far from it. Have the Dutch? I am very much misinformed if there are not Agents from Holland at this very time in this country, who are negotiating with persons concerned in the trade, who are desirous of giving all possible encouragement to them if we should abandon it. Have the Spaniards? On the contrary, it will appear that they immediately took advantage of our disposition, and gave every possible encouragement to the trade, by offering a bounty on the importation of Slaves. Have the French? They who have carried fanaticism, and their ideas of liberty, to an extent as yet unheard of—have they shewn any disposition to imitate our conduct in this particular? The measure was certainly proposed in the National Assembly, but was rejected; nay, not only rejected, but the bounty on the importation of Slaves, as an encouragement to the trade, has been continued at least; I am not sure whether it has not been expressly renewed.

I should not have been surprised if some of the countries had thought it politic to pretend to have a similar disposition with ourselves, and after having induced us to abolish the trade, they had availed themselves of our disposition to humanity. But when they have *not only shewn no disposition to abolish*, but, on the contrary, *every disposition to encourage it*, I have a right to infer, that the abolition of the trade, on our part, would be only the *transfer* of it into the hands of those countries.

On great political questions, where important interests are involved, it would in general be thought sufficient to be able to prove, that *no benefit is likely to arise* to those to whom we are desirous of affording relief; but if I can proceed further: if I can prove, not only that *no advantage*, but that a *great disadvantage* will arise to the Negroes, from the measure that is proposed, no doubt can then remain on the mind of any person who does not prefer *speculative* to *practical humanity*, respecting the propriety of rejecting it.

The mortality on board the English ships trading from Africa was, previous to the Regulating Bill, *four and an eighth per cent.** Since that, it has been reduced to a little more than *three per cent.** The mortality on board *French ships* trading from the same quarter is near *ten per cent.*—so that there is *a mortality of nearly seven per cent. more on board French, than on board English ships.* The mortality in *Dutch ships* is from *five to seven per cent.* The mortality on board *Portuguese ships* is less than either *French* or *Dutch ships*, but *more* than on *English ships*, since the regulating Bill.

Let us then consider, what would be the consequence of the abolition of the trade on our part. Do we regret the deaths, do we regret the cruelties that are said to have been committed? *Those deaths, and those cruelties, would be more than doubled if we were to abolish the trade.*

* The mortality was stated by Mr. Wilberforce to be by the documents of the last year between *ten and eleven per cent.* in the English ships, and previous to the Regulating Bill something more than *th* 22,600 is the number imported last year to *our own Islands*, in British ships, out of which rather more than 2,300 died on the passage.

Suppose

Suppose the case, as it really stands, was to be submitted to the Africans ; suppose we were to consult their inclinations on the subject, what do we believe would be their answer ; miserable as to them the trade might be ; numerous as the calamities they suffer from it ? " If other countries are not " disposed to unite with you in abolishing it, for our sakes " do you continue it ; for whatever may be the evils we " suffer from it, the trade carried on by other countries, " when compared to the trade carried on by you, is as *evil* " when compared to *good*."

I am ready to admit that there is one answer, which would probably be made to this.

Great Britain trades not only for her own islands, but in some degree for those of other countries. No good, but on the contrary, evil, will be the consequence, to those Negroes which we carry into the Foreign West India Islands. But as the trade between Africa and our West India Islands will then be stopped, and, as consequently a smaller number of Negroes will then be wanted, than those which are demanded at present, some degree of good will accrue to the people of Africa from the abolition of the trade on our part.

In answer to this argument, I say, that as the West India Planters purchase Negroes at present, notwithstanding the greatness of their price, I have a right to infer, that they think it for their interest to purchase them, and that consequently, even after the abolition of the trade on our part, they will not fail to purchase them. The point then to be considered is, what is the probability of their being able to smuggle ?

The Committee may, in a great measure, judge of this from the evidence already before them.

By the evidence, it appears, that a great number of Slaves have been *clandestinely stolen*, from time to time, out of our islands, and carried into the Foreign West India Islands. It appears that *several hundreds were stolen*, within a very short period, from Jamaica, and carried into Cuba. These facts may surprise the House, as it is clearly the interest of all the

planters

planters to prevent the smuggling, if possible. But if other countries are able to smuggle Slaves *out of the island*, when it is the interest of every planter and overseer to prevent that practice—it follows, that there will be very little difficulty in smuggling Slaves *into the islands*, where it will be for the interest of every planter and overseer to promote it. The consequence then, of the abolition of the trade on our part, will be only the *transferring it into the hands of other nations*, who will carry it on at a much greater disadvantage to the Africans, and who will *acquire the advantage and profit to themselves of supplying our islands with Slaves*.

I will not call the attention of the Committee to the state of the Negroes in the West India Islands ; and much has been said under this head, of the cruelties they suffer, and of the hard labour they are obliged to undergo. Tales of oppression have been told, and narratives of ill usage have been related, which must undoubtedly shock the feelings of all who heard them ; but is it fair, to infer from extraordinary instances, the general bad usage of the Slaves ? Suppose that in the best cultivated government, a collection was to be made of the different abuses and cruelties that had been committed for a series of years ; suppose that in this country such a collection had been made, and after the *brilliant panegyric* that was made some time ago on our excellent Constitution, some person had risen up, and had stated these, as proofs that our Constitution was very different from what it had been described ; should we have thought ourselves justified in inferring from a *certain number of extraordinary instances*, that we lived under a Government oppressive and tyrannical ?—Should we not rather have answered, that in the most perfect system which the human intellect is capable of forming, some weaknesses, some defects must necessarily exist ; and that it was unfair to draw inferences from extraordinary examples, to the prejudice of any system whatever ? I have a right to draw the same inference with respect to the state of the Slaves in the West India Islands, who, from being Slaves, were necessarily exposed, to certain *peculiar* disadvantages. I have a right

to draw that inference, provided I can prove, that, notwithstanding any particular exception, the general behaviour of the planters or overseers towards the Slaves, cannot have been such as the friends to the abolition have described it to be.

Evidence has certainly been adduced, on both sides, and I should not be afraid, if it were necessary, to oppose the evidence of those who have appeared in favour of the planters, against any evidence which has been adduced on the other side. I should not be afraid to oppose such characters as Lord Rodney, Admiral Barrington, Admiral Hotham, Sir Joshua Rowley, &c. against any authorities, however respectable, who may have come forward in favour of the abolition. But on no such evidence is it my intention to rest the argument; there are facts in support of that evidence, which must leave it without doubt on the minds of the Committee.

Previous to the year 1730, the mortality, and consequently the decrease of the Slaves, in the West India Islands, was very considerable. From the year 1730, to the year 1755, the deaths were reduced to only *two and a half per cent.* more than the births. From the year 1755, to the year 1768, they were reduced to only *one and three-fourths* more than the births. From the year 1768, to the year 1788, they were reduced to only *one per cent.* This then, on the first view of the subject, must prove, that whatever may have been the situation of Slaves in former times, their condition has been gradually improved.

But if we consider the peculiar disadvantages under which they labour, if we consider the small proportion of females with respect to males, the *hurricanes*, and *famines* which have been the *consequence of those hurricanes, and which have swept away, in a short period, thousands of lives*; if we consider thus, that every natural obstacle seems to combine to prevent the increase of the Slaves, I must judge it *physically impossible that they should have increased in the manner, and to the degree to which they have increased, if the cruel treatment they*

they have suffered, and the hard labour imposed upon them, had been such as the friends of the abolition have represented.

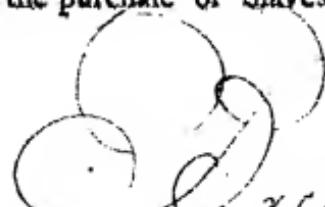
This statement not only enables me to justify the West India Planters, from the aspersions that have been thrown out against them, but enables me likewise to draw still more important conclusions ; — That as the Slaves in the West India Islands have under the present state of things, gradually increased, they will continue to increase. — That very few years will pass, not only before the *births are equal to the deaths*, but before they are *more numerous than the deaths* — That if this is likely to happen under the *present state of things*, *à fortiori*, it will follow that it must take place, if, by *certain regulations*, the *increase of the imported Slaves can be encouraged*.

The only doubt therefore which can remain on the minds of Gentlemen, is, whether it is more for the interest of the planter to *import*, or *breed* ; for if I shall be able to prove, that it is more for the interest of the planter to breed, it will then follow, that the moment the stock of Slaves in the islands is believed by the planters to be sufficient, that moment the further importation must necessarily cease.

In the first place, the gradual increase of the Slaves, of late years, clearly proves that the increase has been encouraged by the planter, who consequently must have conceived it to have been his *interest to breed*. But I mean not to rest the argument on that ground. The price of Slaves was of late years become so great (nearly, I believe I may say, *twice as great*, as they were twenty years ago), that the planter, on the grounds of *oeconomy*, must feel it his interest not to purchase, if by any possible means he can avoid it.

Let us consider, then, that the greatest mortality is on the newly-imported Slaves — That the diseases they bring with them from Africa — the diseases they are likely to contract on the passage, the operations they have been said to undergo in the seasoning, all prove the considerable risk there must be in the purchase of Slaves, and that the planter is not only

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put to a considerable expence, but is put to that expence, with a chance of very speedily losing the fruits of it.

To these considerations others may be added, no less important.—*Slaves bred in the islands are much more attached to the spot*—They have been gradually accustomed to the labour, and must consequently feel less objection to the performance of it. Trained up likewise in regular subordination, they must of course be much more manageable than those who are first put under the care of an overseer at a more advanced period of their life. Slaves, on the other hand, who have been convicted of crimes, may consequently be such as no person would be desirous of employing, if he could possibly avoid it. Let it be added to all these circumstances, that children are of the greatest service in many parts of the labour, so that whilst the planter must be convinced, that they will be the most valuable Slaves, when arrived at the age of maturity, he receives very considerable advantage from them, even in their earliest years. It having then been proved, that the *interest of the planter is to breed, rather than to import*, it must follow, that the planters would be little less than mad, to purchase Slaves, if they were not convinced that a further supply is necessary.

But it has been said, that the births and the deaths in the islands are equal, and that consequently no further supply is wanted. I am ready to admit, that the births and the deaths are nearly equal, but the question must still come to this: Is the stock of slaves in the islands sufficient? Suppose that in the island of Jamaica there are 250,000 *Slaves*, and suppose, which I rather doubt, that number sufficient for the cultivation of the island; I yet venture to assert, if the further importation is to be stopped, that the number of Slaves in the island is not sufficient: for Gentlemen seem to have forgot, that persons in that climate are subject to diseases, of which we are ignorant, and which sweep away *hundreds*, *may sometimes thousands at a time*. They seem to have forgot, that they are subject to *hurricanes and famines*, which have the same dreadful effects.

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Whatever number of Slaves may be necessary for the cultivation of the islands, if further importation is to be stopped, an extra number will be necessary, in order that, in case of any extraordinary mortality, from the circumstances already stated, the complete ruin of the planter may be prevented.

That the time will come, when the stock of Slaves in the island will be sufficient, no person, who has attended to the former part of his argument can doubt. That the Slaves have gradually increased, are gradually increasing, and that by certain regulations the increase may be considerably promoted, must be equally obvious. But these are all considerations, which should induce us to oppose the Abolition, because the event, without any of the evils that may arise from the immediate adoption of that measure, must, in the natural order which I have described, take place in the course of a very short period,

I wish the Committee to consider, what mischief may arise from the planters being able to smuggle: How dangerous it may be, that they should depend on other nations, and not on us, for their supply of Slaves—That from entering into bargains and contracts, perhaps even with our enemies, their dispositions may be alienated from us, *that the loss of the islands themselves may be the consequence; and not only the loss of so much revenue, and so much power to ourselves, but the acquisition of that power, and that revenue by our enemies*—And why should we expose ourselves to such a risk, for any benefit which will result to the Negroes? On the contrary, *it has been proved that it would be a disadvantage to them.*

Let it likewise be considered, that we may deprive ourselves by these means of the power of enforcing regulations, and that thus the trade may go on as it does at present, with a much less rapid increase of the Slaves by birth. This is, however, not the only risk to which we are exposing our Colonies. Let us reflect on the calamities of St. Domingo, which have been imputed by the deputies from that island, to the advocates of abolition. What horror can be described, what ravage can be painted, what cruelty can be committed,

which

which those unfortunate beings have not suffered? And shall we, when principles of the same sort are lurking in our own islands, shall we expose our fellow subjects to the same calamities, who, *if guilty of promoting this trade, have at least been encouraged by ourselves, by Us, who, though parties in the guilt, would in no adequate degree be parties in the suffering?*

It has been said, that there is a distinction between the *Abolition* of the Slave Trade, and the *Emancipation* of the Slaves. I admit that distinction; but should we be surprised if the Slaves, who, receiving no immediate benefit from the abolition of the trade, should complain that these principles are not equally applied to themselves;—should we be surprised if their minds, not cultivated as our own, should not feel so nice a distinction, or at least, if they do feel it, would be too much interested to appear to do so?

That the Slave Trade is in itself an evil, I am ready to admit. That the state of slavery itself is likewise an evil I am no less ready to admit. That if the question was, *not to abolish, but establish* them, I, of all those who profess so much zeal for the interests of humanity, would not be the least eager to oppose it; but, are there not many evils in this world which we should have thought it our duty to prevent, yet which, when once they have taken place, it is more dangerous to oppose than to submit to? *The duty of a Statesman is, not to consider abstractedly what is right or wrong, but to weigh the disadvantages that are likely to arise from the abolition of an evil, against the consequences that are likely to arise from the continuance of it.*

On this ground let us judge of the present question. Here is an evil, which, it has been proved, can be but of *short continuance*; the continuance of which, by *proper regulations*, *may be extremely shortened*. The expiration of which, instead of being productive of good, will be productive of *essential harm* to those whom it is meant to benefit; and shall we appearing to prevent the short continuance of this evil, adopt a measure which can be of *no advantage on one hand, and which threatens every calamity on the other*—which threatens a

diminution of our revenue, and consequently a serious misfortune to the people of this country—which threatens the ruin of the property of those persons who, under *our encouragement*, have settled in the West India Islands—which threatens *murder*, and *all those cruelties* which, by the adoption of the measure, we are desirous of preventing.

I have frequently rejoiced at the idea, that some of those evils which have existed in all ages, and under all governments, are likely, in the present period, to be abolished; that we live in an age where knowledge has become more universal than in any former period, and that, under the mild influence of true religion and philosophy, society is likely to receive considerable improvements. But I have always dreaded that those *improvements should be too rapid*—convinced that by this means their very end may be prevented. Violent changes shake the frame instead of supporting it. They endanger its existence; and if the constitution out-lives the shock, it is restored weak and enfeebled. Gradual changes strengthen and uphold it. The *consequence* of the change, and not the *change*, is felt. Every step secures the preceding, and becomes the foundation for additional improvement.

Agreeing, then, most perfectly with the friends to the abolition in *their end*, I differ from them only in the *means of accomplishing that end*. I am desirous of doing that gradually, which they are desirous of doing rashly.

To some part of the Right Honourable Gentleman's propositions I agree, but I as much differ from him in others.

I have drawn up two propositions, which meet my ideas on the subject, and which, if the Committee will give me leave, I will state to them.

That an address be presented to his Majesty, that he would be pleased to recommend to the Colonial Assemblies, to grant premiums to such Planters and Overseers as shall distinguish themselves by promoting the annual increase of the Slaves *by birth*. And likewise to grant freedom to every female Negro, who has borne and reared up five children to the age of seven years.

2d. That a bounty of 5l. per head be given to the master of every vessel employed in the trade from the coast of Africa, who shall import in any cargo, a greater number of female than male Negroes, not exceeding the age of twenty-five years.

In order that I may be enabled to bring forward my propositions in form, I move that the Chairman should leave the Chair.

Mr. ESTE.—I should not intrude myself on the Committee at so late an hour, but with a view of inducing them to adjourn the debate. There are two propositions, Sir, before the House. The one, for the Abolition of the Slave Trade at large; the other for its gradual Abolition; and I cannot help thinking that Gentlemen should be allowed a further time to compare their respective merits, and consider of the best means of carrying their purpose.

I am persuaded there are several enormities in the Slave Trade which call for regulation; which I also conceive to be the best means to effectuate the final Abolition of the Slave Trade: for it appears to me that a gradual Abolition would answer all the purposes, and effectuate its end in a much better manner than could be done by any other means.

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At four o'Clock Mr. William Smith rose, but Mr. Pitt having risen at the same time, Mr. Smith gave way to him.

The

The Right Honourable WILLIAM Pitt. At this hour of the morning I am afraid, Sir, I am too much exhausted to enter so fully into the subject before the Committee as I could wish ; but if my bodily strength is in any degree equal to the task, I feel so strongly the magnitude of this question, that I am extremely earnest to deliver my sentiments, which I rise to do with the more satisfaction, because I now look forward to the issue of this business with considerable hopes of success.

The debate has this day taken a turn, which, though it has produced a variety of new suggestions, has, upon the whole, reduced this question to a much narrower point than it was ever brought into before.

I cannot say that I quite agree with the Right Honourable Gentleman over the way (Mr. Fox) ; I am far from deploreding all that has been said by my two Honourable Friends ; (Mr. DUNDAS and the Speaker.) I rather rejoice that they have now brought this subject to a fair issue--that something, at least, is already gained, and that the argument has taken altogether a new course this night. It is true, a difference of opinion has been stated, and has been urged with all the force of argument that could be given to it. But give me leave to say, that this difference has been urged upon principles very far removed from those which were maintained by the opponents of my Honourable Friend when he first brought forward his motion. There are very few of those who have spoken this night, who have not thought it their duty to declare their full and entire concurrence with my Honourable Friend in promoting the Abolition of the Slave Trade, *as their ultimate object*: However we may differ as to the time and manner of it, *we are agreed in the Abolition itself*; and my Honourable Friends have expressed their agreement in this sentiment with that sensibility upon the subject, which humanity does most undoubtedly require. I do not, however, think they yet perceive what are the necessary consequences of their own concession, or follow up their own principles to their just conclusion.

The

The point now in dispute between us, is, a difference *merely as to the period of time*, at which the Abolition of the Slave Trade ought to take place. I therefore congratulate this House, the Country, and the World, that this great point is gained; that we may now consider this trade as *having received its condemnation*; that *its sentence is sealed*; that this *Curse of mankind* is seen by the House in its true light; and that the greatest stigma on our national character which ever yet existed, is about to be removed! And, Sir, (which is still more important) that *MANKIND*, I trust, *in general, are now likely to be delivered from the greatest practical evil that ever has afflicted the human race—from the severest and most extensive calamity recorded in the History of the world!*

In proceeding to give my reasons for concurring with my Honourable Friend in his motion, I shall necessarily advert to those topics which my Honourable Friends near me have touched upon; and which they stated to be their motives for preferring a gradual, and in some degree, a distant Abolition of the Slave Trade, to the more immediate and direct measure now proposed to you. Beginning as I do, with declaring that in this respect I differ completely from my Right Honourable Friends near me. I do not, however, mean to say, that I differ as to one observation which has been pressed rather strongly by them. If they can shew that *their* proposition of a *gradual* Abolition, is more likely than *ours* to secure the object which we have in view—that by proceeding gradually we shall arrive *more speedily* at our end, and attain it with *more certainty*, than by a *direct* vote *immediately* to abolish:—If they can shew to the satisfaction both of myself and the Committee, that our proposition has *more* the *appearance* of a speedy Abolition, than the *reality* of it; undoubtedly they will in this case make a convert of me, and my Honourable Friend who moved the question; they will make a convert of every man among us, who looks to this, which I trust we all do, as a question not to be determined by theoretical principles or enthusiastic feelings, but considers the practicability of the measure—aiming simply

simply to effect his object in the shortest time, and in the surest possible manner.

If, however, I shall be able to shew that our measure proceeds *more directly* to its object, and secures it with *more certainty*, and within a *less distant period*; and that the Slave Trade will on our plan be abolished sooner than on his; may I not then hope, that my Right Honourable Friends will be as ready to adopt our proposition, as we should in the other case be willing to accede to theirs?

One of my Right Honourable Friends has stated, that an Act passed here for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, would not *secure* its Abolition. Now, Sir, I should be glad to know, why an Act of the British Legislature, enforced by all those sanctions which we have undoubtedly the power and the right to apply, is not to be effectual; at least as to every material purpose? Will not the executive power have the same appointment of the officers and the courts of judicature, by which all the causes relating to this subject must be tried, that it has in other cases? Will there not be the same system of law by which we now maintain a monopoly of commerce? If the same law, Sir, be applied to the prohibition of the *Slave Trade*, which is applied in the case of *other contraband commerce*, with all the same means of the country to back it, I am at a loss to know why the actual and total Abolition is not as likely to be effected in this way, as by any plan or project of my Honourable Friends, for bringing about a gradual termination of it. But my observation is extremely fortified by what fell from my Honourable Friend who spoke last: he has told you, Sir, that if you will have patience with it for a few years, the Slave Trade must drop of itself, from the increasing dearness of the *commodity* imported, and the increasing progress, on the other hand, of internal population. Is it true, then, that the importations are so expensive and disadvantageous already, that the internal population is even now becoming a cheaper resource? I ask then, if you leave to the importer no means of importation but by *smuggling*, and if, *besides all the present disadvantages*, you load him with all the charges and hazards of the

smuggler,

Please my four leaves forward.

Snuggler, by taking care that the laws against smuggling are in this case watchfully and rigorously enforced, is there any danger of any considerable supply of fresh Slaves being poured into the islands through this channel? And is there any real ground of fear, because a few Slaves may have been smuggled in or out of the islands that a bill will be useless and ineffectual on any such ground? The question under these circumstances will not bear a dispute.

Perhaps, however, my Honourable Friends may take up another ground, and say, "It is true your measure would shut out further importations more immediately; but we do not mean to shut them out immediately. We think it right, on grounds of general Expediency, that they should not be immediately shut out." Let us therefore now come to this question of the Expediency of making the Abolition distant and gradual, rather than immediate.

The argument of expediency in my opinion (like every other argument in this disquisition) will not justify the continuance of the Slave Trade for one unnecessary hour. Supposing it to be in our power (which I have shewn it is) to enforce the prohibition from this present time, the expediency of doing it is to me so clear, that if I went on this principle alone I should not feel a moment's hesitation. What is the argument of expediency stated on the other side? It is doubted whether the deaths and births in the islands are as yet so nearly equal as to ensure the keeping up a sufficient stock of labourers: in answer to this I took the liberty of mentioning in a former year, what appeared to me to be the state of population at that time. My observations were taken from documents which we have reason to judge authentic, and which carried on the face of them the conclusions I then stated: they were the clear, simple, and obvious result of a careful examination which I made into this subject, and any Gentleman who will take the same pains may arrive at the same degree of satisfaction.

These calculations, however, applied to a period of time that is now four or five years past. The births were then in

the general view of them, nearly equal to the deaths ; and, as the state of population was shewn, by a considerable retrospect, to be regularly increasing, an excess of births must before this time have taken place.

Another observation has been made as to the disproportion of the sexes : this, however, is a disparity which existed in any material degree only in former years ; it is a disparity of which the Slave Trade has been itself the cause ; which will gradually diminish as the Slave Trade diminishes, and must entirely cease, if the Trade shall be abolished ; but which, nevertheless, is made the very plea for its continuance. I believe this disproportion of the sexes, taking the *whole* number in the islands, Creole as well as imported Africans, the latter of whom occasion all the disproportion, is not now by any means considerable.

But, Sir, I also shewed, that the great mortality, which turned the balance so as to make the deaths appear more numerous than the births, arose too from the imported Africans, who die in extraordinary numbers in the seasoning. If, therefore, the importation of Negroes should cease, *every one* of the causes of mortality, which I have now stated, would cease also. Nor can I conceive any reason why the present number of labourers should not maintain itself in the West Indies, except it be from some artificial cause, some fault in the islands ; such as the impolicy of their governors, or the cruelty of the managers and officers, whom they employ.

I will not re-iterate all that I said at that time, or go through island by island. It is true, there is a difference in the ceded islands ; and I state them possibly to be, in some respects, an excepted case. But, if we are to enter into the subject of the mortality on *clearing new lands* ; this, Sir, is undoubtedly another question : the mortality here is tenfold ; and this is to be considered, not as the *carrying on* a trade, but as the *setting on foot* a Slave Trade for the purpose of peopling the Colony ; a measure which I think will not now be maintained. I therefore desire Gentlemen to tell me fairly, whether the period they look to is not now arrived ? Whether, at this hour,

the West Indies may not be declared to have actually attained a state in which they can maintain their population ? and upon the answer I must necessarily receive, I think I could safely rest the whole of the question.

One Honourable Gentleman has rather ingeniously observed that one or other of these two assertions of ours, must necessarily be false : that either the population must be decreasing, which we deny ; or, if the population is increasing, that the Slaves must be perfectly well treated, (this being the cause of such population) which we deny also. That the population is rather increasing than otherwise ; and also that the general treatment is by no means so good as it ought to be, are both points which have been separately proved by different evidences ; nor are these two points so entirely incompatible. The ill treatment must be very great indeed, in order to diminish materially the population of any race of people. That it is not so extremely great as to do this, I will admit. I will even admit, if you please, that this charge may possibly have been sometimes exaggerated ; and I certainly think, that it applies less and less as we come nearer to the present times.

But, let us see how this contradiction of ours, as it is thought, really stands, and how the explanation of it will completely settle our minds, on the point in question. Do the Slaves *diminish in numbers*? It can be nothing but *ill treatment* that causes the diminution. This ill treatment the Abolition must and will restrain. In this case, therefore, we ought to vote for the Abolition. On the other hand, Do you chuse to say that the Slaves clearly *increase in numbers*? Then you want no importations, and, in this case also, you may safely vote for the Abolition. Or, if you chuse to say, as the third and only other case which can be put, and which perhaps is the nearest to the truth, that the population is *nearly stationary*, and the treatment *neither so bad nor so good* as it might be ; then surely, Sir, it will not be denied, that this of all others, is on *each* of the two grounds, the proper period for stopping further supplies : for your population, which you own is already stationary, will thus be made undoubtedly to increase from the

births ; and the good treatment of your present Slaves, which I am now supposing is but very moderate, will be necessarily improved also by the same measure of Abolition. I say, therefore, that these propositions, contradictory as they may be represented, are in truth not at all inconsistent, but even come in aid of each other, and lead to a conclusion that is decisive. And let it be always remembered, that in this branch of my argument, I have only in view the well-being of the West Indies, and do not now ground any thing on the African part of the question.

But, Sir, I may carry these observations respecting the islands much further. It is within the power of the Colonists, (and is it not then their indispensable duty ?) to apply themselves to the correction of those various abuses, by which population is restrained ? The most important consequences may be expected to attend Colonial regulations for this purpose. With the improvement of internal population, the condition of every Negro will improve also ; his liberty will advance, or at least he will be *approaching* to a state of liberty. Nor can you increase the happiness, or extend the freedom of the Negro, without adding in an equal degree to the *safety of the islands*, and of all their inhabitants. Thus, Sir, in the place of *Slaves*, who naturally have an interest directly opposite to that of their masters, and are therefore viewed by them with an eye of constant suspicion, you will create a body of valuable *citizens and subjects*, forming a part of the same community, having a common interest with their superiors, in the security and prosperity of the whole.

And, here let me add, that in proportion as you increase the happiness of these unfortunate beings, you will undoubtedly increase in effect the *quantity of their labour also*. Gentlemen, talk of the *diminution of the labour of the islands* ! I will venture to assert, that, even if in consequence of the Abolition there were to be some decrease in the number of hands ; the quantity of work done, *supposing the condition of the Slaves to improve*, would by no means diminish in the same proportion ; perhaps would be far from diminishing at all : For if you re-

tore to this degraded race the true feelings of men ; if you take them out from among the order of brutes, and place them on a level with the rest of the human species, they will then work with that energy which is natural to men ; and their labour will be productive, in a thousand ways, above what it has yet been ; as the labour of a man is always more productive than that of a mere brute.

It generally happens that in every bad cause some information arises out of the evidence of its defenders themselves, which serves to expose in one part or other the weakness of their defence. It is the characteristic of such a cause, that if it be at all gone into, even by its own supporters, it is liable to be ruined by the contradictions in which those who maintain it are for ever involved.

The Committee of the Privy Council of Great Britain sent over certain queries to the West India islands, with a view of elucidating the present subject ; and they particularly inquired, whether the Negroes had any days or hours allotted to them, in which they might work for themselves. The Assemblies in their answers, with an air of great satisfaction state the labour of the Slaves to be moderate, and the West India system to be well calculated to promote the domestic happiness of the Slaves : They add, " that proprietors are not " compelled by law to allow their ' Slaves any part of the six " working days of the week for themselves, but that it is the " general practice to allow them one afternoon in every week " out of crop time, which, with such hours as they chuse to " work on Sundays, is time amply sufficient for their own pur- " poses :" Now, therefore, *will* the Negroes, or I may rather say, *do* the Negroes *work for their own emolument* ? I beg the Committee's attention to this point : The Assembly of Grenada proceeds to state.—I have their own words for it— " That though the Negroes are allowed the afternoons of only " one day in every week, they will do as much work in that af- " ternoon, when employed for their own benefit, as in the whole " day when employed in their masters service."

Now,

Now, Sir, I will desire you to burn all my calculations ; to disbelieve, if you please, every word I have said on the present state of population ; nay, I will admit, for the sake of argument, that the numbers are decreasing, and the productive labour at present insufficient for the cultivation of those countries : And I will then ask, whether the increase in the quantity of labour which is reasonably to be expected from the improved condition of the Slaves, is not by the admission of the islands themselves, by their admission not merely of an argument but a fact, far more than sufficient to counterbalance any decrease which can be rationally apprehended from a defective state of their population ? Why, Sir, a Negro if he works for *himself*, and not for a master, will do double work ! This is their own account. If you will believe the planters, if you will believe the legislature of the islands, the productive labour of the colonies would, in case the Negroes worked as free labourers instead of Slaves, *be literally doubled*. *Half* the present labourers on this supposition would suffice, for the *whole* cultivation of our islands on the present scale. I therefore, confidently ask the House, whether in considering the whole of this question, we may not fairly look forward to an improvement in the condition of these unhappy and degraded beings ; not only as an event desirable on the ground of humanity and political prudence ; but also as a means of increasing, very considerably indeed, (even without any increasing population,) the productive industry of the Islands ?

When Gentlemen are so nicely balancing the past and future means of cultivating the plantations, let me request them to put this argument into the scale ; and the more they consider it, the more will they be satisfied, that both the solidity of the principle which I have stated, and the fact which I have just quoted, in the very words of the Colonial Legislature, will bear me out in every inference I have drawn. I think they will perceive also, that it is the undeniable duty of this House, on the grounds of true policy, immediately to sanction and carry into effect that system which ensures these important advantages ;

advantages ; in addition to all those other inestimable blessings which follow in their train.

If, therefore, the argument of expediency as applying to the West India Islands, is the test by which this question is to be tried ; I trust I have now established this proposition, namely, that whatever tends most speedily and effectually to meliorate the condition of the Slaves, is, undoubtedly on the ground of expediency, leaving justice out of the question, the main object to be pursued.

That the immediate Abolition of the Slave Trade will most eminently have this effect, and that it is the only measure from which this effect can in any considerable degree be expected, are points to which I shall presently come ; but before I enter upon them, let me notice one or two further circumstances.

We are told (and by respectable and well-informed persons) that the purchase of new negroes has been injurious instead of profitable to the planters themselves ; so large a proportion of these unhappy wretches being found to perish in the seasoning. Writers well versed in this subject have even advised that, in order to remove the temptation which the Slave Trade offers to expend large sums in this injudicious way, *the door of importation should be shut.*—This very plan which we now propose, the mischief of which is represented to be so great as to outweigh so many other momentous considerations has actually been recommended by some of the best authorities, as a plan highly requisite to be adopted on the very principle of advantage to the Islands ; nay, not merely on that principle of general and political advantage on which I have already touched, but for the advantage of the very individuals who would otherwise be most forward in purchasing Slaves. On the part of the West Indians it is urged, “ The Planters are in debt : They are already distressed ; “ if you stop the Slave Trade, they will be ruined.” Mr. Long, the celebrated historian of Jamaica, recommends the stopping of importations, as a receipt for enabling the plantations which are embarrassed to get out of debt. I will quote his words,

words. Speaking of the various terms on which money is often borrowed for the purchase of fresh Slaves, he advises " the laying a duty *equal to a prohibition* on all negroes imported " for the space of four or five years, except for re-exportation." " Such a law," he proceeds to say, " would be attended with the following good consequences. It would put an immediate stop to these extortions ; it would enable the planter to retrieve his affairs by *preventing him from running in debt*, either by renting or purchasing of negroes ; it would render such recruits less necessary, *by the redoubled care he would be obliged to take of his present stock, the preservation of their lives and health* ; And lastly, it would raise the value of negroes in the island.—A NORTH AMERICAN PROVINCE, BY THIS PROHIBITION ALONE FOR A FEW YEARS, FROM BEING DEEPLY PLUNGED IN DEBT, HAS BECOME INDEPENDENT, RICH, AND FLOURISHING."

On this authority of Mr. Long I rest the question, whether the prohibition of further importations is that rash, impolitic, and completely ruinous measure, which it is so confidently declared to be with respect to our West Indian Plantations.

I do not however mean in thus treating this branch of the subject, absolutely to exclude the question of indemnification on the supposition of *possible disadvantages* affecting the West Indies through the Abolition of the Slave Trade. But when Gentlemen set up a claim of compensation merely on those *general allegations*, which are all that I have yet heard from them, I can only answer, *let them produce their case in a distinct and specific form* ; and if upon any practicable or reasonable grounds it shall claim consideration, it will then be time enough for Parliament to decide upon it.

I now come to another circumstance of great weight, connected with this part of the question. I mean the danger to which the Islands are exposed from those negroes who are newly imported. This, Sir, like the observation which I lately made, is no mere speculation of ours ; for here again I refer you to Mr. Long, the Historian of Jamaica. He treats particularly

particularly of the dangers to be dreaded from the introduction of Coromantine negroes; an appellation under which are comprised several descriptions of Negroes obtained on the Gold Coast, whose native country is not exactly known, and who are purchased in a variety of markets, having been brought from some distance inland. With a view of preventing insurrections, he advises, that " by laying a duty equal to a prohibition, no more of these Coromantines should be bought;" and after noticing one Insurrection which happened through their means, he tells you of another in the following year, in which thirty-three Coromantines, *"most of whom had been newly imported,"* suddenly rose and in "the space of an hour murdered and wounded no less than nineteen white persons."

To the authority of Mr. Long, both in this and other parts of his work, I may add the recorded opinion of the Committee of the House of Assembly of Jamaica itself; who, in consequence of a rebellion among the Slaves, were appointed to inquire into the best means of preventing future Insurrections. The Committee reported, " That the rebellion had originated (like most or all others) with the Coromantines; and they proposed that a bill should be brought in for laying a higher duty on the importation of these particular Negroes," which was intended to operate as a prohibition.

But the danger is not confined to the importation of Coromantines. Mr. Long, carefully investigating as he does the causes of such frequent Insurrections, particularly at Jamaica, accounts for them from the greatness of its general importations. " In two years and a half," says he, " 27,000 Negroes have been imported."—" No wonder we have rebels! Twenty-seven thousand in two years and a half?" Why, Sir, I believe that in some late years there have been as many imported into the same Island within the same period! Surely, Sir, when Gentlemen talk so vehemently of the safety of the Islands, and charge us with being so indifferent to it; when they speak of the calamities of St. Domingo, and of similar dangers impending over their own heads at the present

hour, it ill becomes *them* to be the persons who are *crying out for further importations*. It ill becomes *them* to charge upon *us* the crime of stirring up Insurrections—upon *us* who are only adopting the very principles, which Mr. Long—which in part even the Legislature of Jamaica itself, laid down in the time of danger, with an avowed view to the prevention of any such calamity.

The House, I am sure will easily believe it is no small satisfaction to me, that among the many arguments for prohibiting the Slave Trade which crowd upon my mind; the security of our West India possessions against internal commotions, as well as foreign enemies, is among the most prominent and most forcible. And here let me apply to my two Right Honourable Friends, and ask them, whether in this part of the argument they do not see reason for *immediate* Abolition? Why should you any longer import into those countries that which is the *very seed* of Insurrection and rebellion? Why should you persist in introducing those latent principles of conflagration, which if they should once burst forth, may annihilate in a single day the industry of an hundred years? Why will you subject yourselves, with open eyes, to the evident and imminent risk of a calamity, which may throw you back a whole century in your profits, in your cultivation, in your progress to the emancipation of your Slaves; and disappointing at once every one of these golden expectations, may retard not only the accomplishment of that happy system which I have attempted to describe, but may cut off even your opportunity of taking any one introductory step? Let us begin from this time! Let us not commit these important interests to any further hazard! Let us prosecute this great object from this very hour! Let us vote that the Abolition of the Slave Trade shall be *immediate*, and not left to I know not what future time or contingency! Will my Right Hon. Friends answer for the safety of the Islands during any imaginable intervening period? Or do they think that any little advantages of the kind which they state, can have any weight

in that scale of expediency in which this great question ought undoubtedly to be tried.

Thus stated, and thus alone, Sir, can it be truly said, to what does the whole of my Right Honourable Friend's arguments, on the head of expediency, amount? It amounts but to this:—The Colonies on the one hand would have to struggle with some few difficulties and disadvantages at the first, for the sake of obtaining on the other hand immediate security to their leading interests; of ensuring Sir! even their own political existence; and for the sake also of immediately commencing that system of progressive improvement in the condition of the Slaves, which is necessary to raise them from the state of brutes to that of rational beings, but which never can begin until the introduction of these new disaffected and dangerous Africans into the same gangs, shall have been stopped.

If any argument can in the slightest degree justify the severity that is now so generally practised in the treatment of the Slaves, it must be the introduction of these Africans. It is the introduction of these Africans that renders all idea of Emancipation for the present so chimerical; and the very mention of it so dreadful. It is the introduction of these Africans that keeps down the condition of all Plantation Negroes. Whatever system of treatment is deemed necessary by the Planters to be adopted towards these new Africans, extends itself to the other Slaves also; instead therefore of deferring the hour when you will finally put an end to importations, vainly purposing that the condition of your present Slaves should previously be mended, you must, in the very first instance, stop your importations, if you hope to introduce any rational or practicable plan, either of gradual emancipation, or present general improvement.

Having now done with this question of expediency as affecting the Islands, I come next to a proposition advanced by my Right Honourable Friend, (Mr. Dundas,) which appeared to intimate, that on account of some patrimonial rights of the

West Indians, the prohibition of the Slave Trade might be considered as an invasion of their legal inheritance.

Now, in answer to this proposition, I must make two or three remarks, which I think my Right Honourable Friend will find some considerable difficulty in answering :

First, I observe that his argument, if it be worth any thing, applies just as much to gradual as immediate Abolition. I have no doubt, that at whatever period he should be disposed to say, the Abolition should actually take place, this defence will equally be set up ; for it certainly is just as good an argument against an Abolition seven, or seventy years hence, as against an Abolition at this moment. It supposes, we have no right whatever to stop the importations ; and even though the disadvantage to our plantations, which some Gentlemen suppose to attend the measure of immediate Abolition, should be admitted gradually to lessen by the lapse of a few years, yet in point of principle, the absence of all right of interference would remain the same. My Right Honourable Friend, therefore, I am sure will not press an argument not less hostile to his proposition than to ours. But let us investigate the foundation of this objection, and I will commence what I have to say, by putting a question to my Right Honourable Friend. It is chiefly on the presumed ground of *our being bound by a parliamentary sanction heretofore given to the African Slave Trade*, that this argument against the Abolition is rested. Does then my Right Honourable Friend, or does any man in this House think, that the Slave Trade has received any such parliamentary sanction, as must place it more out of the jurisdiction of the legislature for ever after, than the other branches of our national commerce ? I ask, is there any one regulation of any part of our commerce, which, if this argument be valid, may not equally be objected to, on the ground of its affecting some man's patrimony, some man's property, or some man's expectations ? Let it never be forgotten that the argument I am canvassing would be just as strong, if the possession affected were small, and the possessors humble ; for on every principle of justice,

the property of any single individual, or small number of individuals is as sacred, as that of the great body of West Indians. Justice ought to extend her protection with rigid impartiality to the rich and to the poor, to the powerful and to the humble. If this be the case, in what a situation does my Right Honourable Friend's argument place the legislature of Britain? What room is left for their interference in the regulation of any part of our commerce? It is scarcely possible to lay a duty on any one article, which may not when first imposed, be said in some way to affect the property of individuals, and even of some entire classes of the community. If the laws respecting the Slave Trade imply a contract for its perpetual continuance, I will venture to say, there does not pass a year without some act, equally pledging the faith of parliament to the perpetuating of some other branch of commerce. In short, I repeat my observation, that no new tax can be imposed, much less can any *prohibitory* duty be ever laid on any branch trade, that has before been regulated by parliament, if this principle be once admitted.

Before I refer to the acts of parliament by which the public faith is said to be pledged; let me remark also, that a contract for the continuance of the Slave Trade, must on the principles which I shall presently insist on, have been void, even from the beginning; for if this trade is an outrage upon justice, and only another name for fraud, robbery and murder; will any man urge that the legislature could possibly by any pledge whatever incur the obligation of being an accessory, or I may even say, a principal in the commission of such enormities, by sanctioning their continuance? as well might an individual think himself bound by a promise to commit an assassination. I am confident, Gentlemen must see, that our proceeding on such grounds, would infringe all the principles of law, and subvert the very foundation of morality.

Let us now see, how far the acts themselves shew that there is this sort of parliamentary pledge to continue the African Slave Trade. The Act of 23. Geo. I. C. 31, is that by which we are supposed to be bound up by contract to sanction all

all those horrors now so incontrovertibly proved. How surprised then Sir, must the House be to find, that by a clause of their very act, some of these outrages are expressly forbidden ! It says, " No commander, or master of a ship trading to " Africa, shall by fraud, force, or violence, or by any indi- " rect practice whatsoever, take on board or carry away from " the coast of Africa, any Negro, or Native of the said " country, or commit any violence on the Natives, to the pre- " judice of the said trade, and that every person so offending, " shall for every such offence forfeit"—When it comes to the penalty, sorry am I to say, that we see too close a resemblance to the West India law, which inflicts the payment of 30l. as the punishment for murdering a negro. The price of blood in Africa is 100l. but even this penalty is enough to prove that the Act at least does not sanction, much less does it engage to perpetuate enormities ; and the whole trade has now been demonstrated to be a mass, a system of enormities ; of enormities which incontrovertibly bid defiance not only to this clause, but to every regulation which our ingenuity can devise, and our power carry into effect. Nothing can accomplish the object of this clause but an extinction of the trade itself,

But, Sir, let us see what was the motive for carrying on the trade at all ? The preamble of the Act states it, " Whereas " the trade to and from Africa is *very advantageous to Great Britain, and necessary for the supplying the Plantations and Colonies thereunto belonging with a sufficient number of Negroes at reasonable rates, and for that purpose the said trade should be carried on,*" &c. — Here then we see what the Parliament had in view when it passed this act ; and I have clearly shewn that not one of the occasions on which it grounded its proceedings now exists. I may then plead, I think, the very act itself as an argument for the Abolition. If it is shewn, that instead of being " very advantageous," to Great Britain, this trade is the most destructive that can well be imagined to her interests ; that it is the ruin of our seamen ; that it stops the extension of our manufactures.—If it is proved in the

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second place that it is not *now* necessary for the “ supplying “ our Plantations with Negroes ;” if it is further established that this traffick was from the very beginning contrary to the first principles of justice, and consequently that a pledge for its continuance, had one been attempted to have been given, must have been completely and absolutely void—where then in this Act of Parliament is the contract to be found, by which Britain is bound, as she is said to be, never to listen to her own true interests, and to the cries of the Natives of Africa ? Is it not clear that all argument, founded on the supposed pledged faith of Parliament, makes against those who employ it ? I refer you to the principles which obtain in other cases. Every Trade Act shews undoubtedly that the Legislature is used to pay a tender regard to all classes of the community. But if for the sake of moral duty, of national honour, or even of great political advantage, it is thought right, by authority of Parliament, to alter any long established system, Parliament is competent to do it. The Legislature will undoubtedly be careful to subject individuals to as little inconvenience as possible ; and if any peculiar hardship should arise, that can be distinctly stated, and fairly pleaded, there will ever, I am sure, be a liberal feeling towards them in the Legislature of this country, which is the guardian of all who live under its protection. On the present occasion, the most powerful considerations call upon us to Abolish the Slave Trade ; and if we refuse to attend to them on the alleged ground of pledged faith and contract, we shall depart as widely from the practice of Parliament, as from the path of moral duty. If indeed there is any case of hardship, which comes within the proper cognizance of Parliament, and calls for the exercise of its liberality,--well ! But such a case must be reserved for calm consideration, as a matter distinct from the present question.

I beg pardon for dwelling so long on the argument of expediency, and on the manner in which it affects the West Indies. I have been carried away by my own feelings on some of these points into a greater length than I intended, especially

especially considering how fully the subject has been already argued. The result of all I have said, is, that there exists no impediment, no obstacle, no shadow of reasonable objection on the ground of pledged faith, or even on that of national expediency, to the Abolition of this trade. On the contrary, all the arguments drawn from those sources plead for it, and they plead much more loudly, and much more strongly in every part of the question, for an immediate, than for a gradual Abolition.

But now, Sir, I come to Africa. That is the ground on which I rest, and here it is that I say my Right Honourable Friends do not carry their principles to their full extent.— Why ought the Slave Trade to be abolished? BECAUSE IT IS INCURABLE INJUSTICE. How much stronger then is the argument for immediate, than gradual abolition! By allowing it to continue even for one hour, do not my Right Honourable Friends weaken—do not they desert, their own argument of its injustice? If on the ground of injustice it ought to be abolished at last, why ought it not now? Why is injustice to be suffered to remain for a single hour? From what I hear without doors, it is evident that there is a general conviction entertained of its being far from just, and from that very conviction of its injustice, some men have been led, I fear, to the supposition, that the Slave Trade never could have been permitted to begin, but from some strong and irresistible necessity; a necessity, however, which if it was fancied to exist at first, I have shewn cannot be thought by any man whatever to exist now. This plea of necessity, thus presumed, and presumed, as I suspect, from the circumstance of injustice itself, has caused a sort of acquiescence in the continuance of this evil. Men have been led to place it among the rank of those *necessary evils*, which are supposed to be the lot of human creatures, and to be permitted to fall upon some countries or individuals, rather than upon others, by that Being, whose ways are inscrutable to us, and whose dispensations, it is conceived, we ought not to look into. The origin of evil is indeed a subject beyond the reach of human understandings; and

and the permission of it by the Supreme Being, is a subject into which it belongs not to us to inquire. But where the evil in question is a moral evil which a man can scrutinize, and where that moral evil has its origin *with ourselves*, let us not imagine that we can clear our consciences by this general, not to say irreligious and impious way of laying aside the question. If we reflect at all on this subject, we must see that every necessary evil supposes that some other and *greater* evil would be incurred were it removed : I therefore desire to ask, what can be that greater evil, which can be stated to overbalance the one in question ?—*I know of no evil that ever has existed, nor can imagine one to exist, worse than the tearing of SEVENTY OR EIGHTY THOUSAND PERSONS annually from their native land, by a combination of the civilized nations, inhabiting the most enlightened quarter of the globe; but more especially under the sanction of the laws of that nation, which calls herself the most free and the most happy of them all.* Even if these miserable beings were proved guilty of every crime before you take them off, of which however not a single proof is adduced, ought *we* to take upon ourselves the office of executioners ? And even if we condescend so far, still can we be justified in taking them, unless we have clear proof that they are criminals ?

But if we go much further,—if we ourselves *tempt* them to sell their fellow-creatures to us, we may rest assured, that they will take care to provide by every method, by kidnapping, by village-breaking, by unjust wars, by iniquitous condemnations, by rendering Africa a scene of bloodshed and misery, a supply of victims increasing in proportion to our demand.—Can we then hesitate in deciding whether the wars in Africa are their wars or ours ? It was our arms in the River Cameroon put into the hands of the Trader, that furnished him with the means of pushing his trade ; and I have no more doubt that they are British arms, put into the hands of Africans, which promote universal war and desolation, than I can doubt their having done so in that individual instance.

I have shewn how great is the enormity of this evil, even on the supposition that we take only convicts and prisoners of war. But take the subject in the other way; take it on the grounds stated by the Right Honourable Gentleman over the way; and how does it stand? Think of **EIGHTY THOUSAND** persons carried away out of their country by *we know not what means*! For crimes imputed! For light or inconsiderable faults! For debt perhaps! For the crime of witchcraft! Or a thousand other weak and scandalous pretexts! Besides all the fraud and kidnapping, the villainies and perfidy, by which the Slave Trade is supplied. Reflect on these eighty thousand persons thus annually taken off! There is something in the horror of it, that surpasses all the bounds of imagination. Admitting that there exists in Africa something like to Courts of Justice; yet what an office of humiliation and meanness is it in us, to take upon ourselves to carry into execution the partial, the cruel, iniquitous sentences of such Courts, as if we also were strangers to all religion, and to the first principles of justice. But that country, it is said, has been in some degree civilized, and civilized by us. It is said they have gained some knowledge of the principles of justice. What, Sir, have they gained principles of justice from *us*? Is their civilization brought about by us!!!—Yes, we give them enough of our intercourse to convey to them the means, and to initiate them in the study of mutual destruction. We give them just enough of the forms of justice to enable them to add the pretext of legal trials to their other modes of perpetrating the most atrocious iniquity. We give them just enough of European improvements, to enable them the more effectually to turn Africa into a ravaged wilderness. Some evidences say, that the Africans are addicted to the practice of gambling; that they even sell their wives and children, and ultimately themselves. Are these then the legitimate sources of Slavery? Shall we pretend that we can thus acquire an honest right to exact the labour of these people? Can we pretend that we have a right to carry away to distant regions, men of whom we know nothing by authentic inquiry,

tic inquiry, and of whom there is every reasonable presumption to think, that those who sell them to us, have no right to do so. But the evil does not stop here. I feel that there is not time for me to make all the remarks which the subject deserves, and I refrain from attempting to enumerate half the dreadful consequences of this system. Do you think nothing of the ruin and the miseries in which so many other individuals, still remaining in Africa, are involved in consequence of carrying off so many myriads of people? Do you think nothing of their families which are left behind? Of the connections which are broken? Of the friendships, attachments, and relationships that are burst asunder? Do you think nothing of the miseries in consequence, that are felt from generation to generation? Of the privation of that happiness which might be communicated to them by the introduction of civilization, and of mental and moral improvement? A happiness which you with-hold from them so long as you permit the Slave Trade to continue. What do you yet know of the internal state of Africa? You have carried on a Trade to that quarter of the globe from this civilized and enlightened country; but such a trade, that instead of diffusing either knowledge or wealth, it has been the check to every laudable pursuit. Instead of any fair interchange of commodities; instead of conveying to them from this highly favoured land, any means of improvement, you carry with you that noxious plant by which every thing is withered and blasted; under whose shade nothing that is useful or profitable to Africa will ever flourish or take root. Long as that continent has been known to navigators, the extreme line and boundaries of its coasts is all with which Europe is yet become acquainted; while other countries in the same parallel of latitude through a happier system of intercourse have reaped the blessings of a mutually beneficial commerce. But as to the whole interior of that Continent you are, by your own principles of commerce, as yet entirely shut out: Africa is known to you only in its skirts. Yet even there you are able to infuse a poison that spreads its contagious effects from one end of

it to the other, which penetrates to its very centre, corrupting every part to which it reaches. You there subvert the whole order of nature; you aggravate every natural barbarity, and furnish to every man living on that Continent, motives for committing, under the name and pretext of Commerce, acts of perpetual violence and perfidy against his neighbour.

Thus, Sir, has the perversion of British commerce carried misery instead of happiness to one whole quarter of the globe. False to the very principles of trade, misguided in our policy, and unmindful of our duty, what astonishing—I had almost said, what *irreparable* mischief, have we brought upon that Continent!—I would apply this thought to the present question—How shall we ever repair this mischief? How shall we hope to obtain, if it be possible, forgiveness from Heaven for those enormous evils we have committed, if we refuse to make use of those means which the mercy of Providence hath still reserved to us for wiping away the guilt and shame with which we are now covered. If we refuse even this degree of compensation, if knowing the miseries we have caused, we refuse even now to put a stop to them, how greatly aggravated will be the guilt of Great Britain! and what a blot will the history of these transactions for ever be in the history of this country! Shall we then *DELAY* to repair these injuries, and to begin rendering this justice to Africa? *Shall we not count the days and hours* that are suffered to intervene and to delay the accomplishment of such a work? Reflect what an immense object is before you—what an object for a nation to have in view, and to have a prospect, under the favour of Providence, of being now permitted to attain! I think the House will agree with me in cherishing the ardent wish to enter without delay, upon the measures necessary for these great ends; and I am sure that the immediate Abolition of the Slave Trade is the first, the principal, the most indispensable act of policy, of duty, and of justice, that the Legislature of this country has to take, if it is indeed their wish to secure those important objects

objects to which I have alluded, and which we are bound to pursue by the most solemn obligations.

There is, however, one argument set up as an universal answer to every thing that can be urged on our side; whether we address ourselves to Gentlemen's understandings, or to their hearts and consciences. It is necessary I should remove this formidable objection; for though not often stated in distinct terms, I fear it is one which has a very wide influence. The Slave Trade system, it is supposed, has taken so deep root in Africa, that it is absurd to think of its being eradicated; and the Abolition of that share of trade carried on by Great Britain (and especially if her example is not followed by other powers) is likely to be of very little service. Give me leave to say in answer to so dangerous an argument, that we ought to be extremely sure indeed of the assumption on which it rests, before we venture to rely on its validity; before we decide that an evil which we ourselves contribute to inflict is incurable, and on that very plea, refuse to desist from bearing our part in the system which produces it. You are not sure, it is said, that other nations will give up the trade, if you should renounce it. I answer, if this trade is as criminal as it is asserted to be, or if it has in it a thousandth part of the criminality, which I, and others, after thorough investigation of the subject, charge upon it; GOD forbid that we should hesitate in determining to relinquish so iniquitous a traffic; even though it should be retained by other countries. GOD forbid, however, that we should fail to do our utmost towards inducing other countries to abandon a bloody commerce which they have probably been in good measure led by our example to pursue. GOD forbid that we should be capable of wishing to arrogate to ourselves the glory of being singular in renouncing it!

I tremble at the thought of Gentlemen's indulging themselves in this argument (an argument as pernicious as it is futile) which I am combating. "We are friends," say they, "to humanity. We are second to none of you in our zeal for the good of Africa,—but the French will not abolish,—the Dutch

“ Dutch will not abolish. We wait therefore on prudential
“ principles till they join us, or set us an example.”

How, Sir! Is this enormous evil ever to be eradicated, if every nation is thus prudentially to wait till the concurrence of all the world shall have been obtained?—Let me remark too, that there is no nation in Europe that has, on the one hand, plunged so deeply into this guilt as Britain; or that is so likely, on the other, to be looked up to as an example, if she should have the manliness to be the first in decidedly renouncing it. But, Sir, does not this argument apply a thousand times more strongly in a contrary way? How much more justly may other nations point to us, and say, “ Why should we abolish “ the Slave Trade, when Great Britain has not abolished?—“ Britain, free as she is, just and honourable as she is, and “ deeply also involved as she is in this commerce above all “ nations, not only has not abolished, but *has refused to abolish*.—She has investigated it well; she has gained the “ completest insight into its nature and effects; she has col-“ lected volumes of evidence on every branch of the subject. “ Her Senate has deliberated—has deliberated again and “ again—and what is the result? She has gravely and solemnly “ determined to *sanction* the Slave Trade. She sanctions it at “ least for a while—her Legislature therefore, it is plain, sees “ no guilt in it, and has thus furnished us with the strongest “ evidence that she can furnish,—of the justice unquestionably, “ —and of the policy also, in a certain measure and in certain “ cases at least, of permitting this traffick to continue.”

This, Sir, is the argument with which we furnish the other Nations of Europe, if We again refuse to put an end to the Slave Trade. Instead therefore of imagining, that by chusing to presume on their continuing it, we shall have exempted ourselves from guilt, and have transferred the whole criminality to them; let us rather reflect that on the very principle urged against us, we shall henceforth have to answer for *their* crimes, as well as our own. We have strong reasons to believe that it depends upon us, whether other countries will persist in this bloody trade or not. Already

we have suffered one year to pass away, and now that the question is renewed, a proposition is made for *gradual*, with the view of preventing *immediate* abolition. I know the difficulty that exists in attempting to reform long-established abuses ; and I know the danger arising from the argument in favour of delay, in the case of evils which nevertheless are thought too enormous to be borne, when considered as perpetual. But by proposing some other period than the present, by prescribing some condition, by waiting for some contingency, or by refusing to proceed till a thousand favourable circumstances unite together ; perhaps until we obtain the general concurrence of Europe ; (a concurrence which I believe never yet took place at the commencement of any one improvement in policy or in morals) year after year escapes, and the most enormous evils go unredressed. We see this abundantly exemplified, not only in public, but in private life. Similar observations have been often applied to the case of *personal* reformation. If you go into the street it is a chance but the first person who crosses you is one, " *Vivendi recte qui prorogat horam.*" We may wait ; we may delay to cross the stream before us, till it has run down ; but we shall wait for ever, for the river will still flow on, without being exhausted. We shall be no nearer the object which we profess to have in view, so long as the step, which alone can bring us to it, is not taken. Until the actual, the only remedy is applied, we ought neither to flatter ourselves that we have as yet thoroughly laid to heart the evil we affect to deplore ; nor that there is as yet any reasonable assurance, of its being brought to an actual termination.

It has also been occasionally urged, that there is something in the disposition and nature of the Africans themselves, which renders all prospect of civilization on that continent extremely unpromising. " It has been known" (says Mr. Frazer, in his evidence) " that a boy has been put to death, who was refused to be purchased as a slave." This single story was deemed by that Gentleman a sufficient proof of the barbarity of the Africans, and of the inutility of abolishing the Slave

Trade. My Honourable Friend, however, has told you, that this boy had previously run away from his master three several times ; that the master had to pay his value according to the custom of his country, every time he was brought back ; and that partly from anger at the boy for running away so frequently, and partly to prevent a still further repetition of the same expense, he determined to put him to death.—Such was the explanation of the story given in the cross examination. This, Sir, is the signal instance that has been dwelt upon of African barbarity—This *African*, we admit, was *unenlightened*, and altogether barbarous : but let us now ask what would a *civilized* and *enlightened West Indian*, or a body of *West Indians*, have done in any case of a parallel nature?—I will quote you, Sir, a law, passed in the *West Indies*, in the year 1722, which, in turning over the book I happened just now to cast my eye upon ; by which law, this very same crime of running away, is, by the legislature of the island—by the grave and deliberate sentence of that enlightened legislature, *punished with death* : and this, not in the case only, of the *third* offence, but even in the very *first* instance. It is enacted “ that if any Negro, or other slave shall withdraw himself from his master, for the term of six months ; or any slave that was absent, shall not return within that time “ it shall be adjudged felony, and every such person shall suffer death.” There is also another *West Indian* law, by which every *Negro*’s hand is armed against his fellow-negroes, by his being authorized to kill a runaway Slave, and even having a reward held out to him for doing so. Let the House now contrast the two cases. Let them ask themselves which of the two exhibits the greater barbarity?—Let them reflect, with a little *candor* and *liberality*, whether on the ground of any of those facts, and loose insinuations as to the sacrifices to be met with in the evidence, they can possibly reconcile to themselves the excluding of Africa from all means of civilization?—Whether they can possibly vote for the continuance of the Slave Trade upon the principle, that the Africans have shewn themselves to be a race of *incorrigible barbarians*?

I hope,

I hope, therefore, we shall hear no more of the moral impossibility of civilizing the Africans, nor have our understandings and consciences again insulted, by being called upon to sanction the Slave Trade, until other nations shall have set the example of abolishing it. While we have been deliberating upon the subject, one nation, not ordinarily taking the lead in politics, nor by any means remarkable for the boldness of its councils, has determined on a gradual Abolition; a determination, indeed, which, since it permits for a time the existence of the Slave Trade, would be an unfortunate pattern for our imitation. France, it is said, will take up the Trade, if we relinquish it. What? Is it supposed that in the present situation of St. Domingo, of an Island which used to take three-fourths of all the Slaves required by the Colonies of France, she, of all countries, will think of taking it up? What countries remain? The Portuguese, the Dutch, and the Spaniards. Of those countries let me declare it is my opinion, that if they see us renounce the Trade, after full deliberation, they will not be disposed, even on principles of policy, to rush further into it.—But I say more: How are they to furnish the *Capital* necessary for carrying it on? If there is any aggravation of our guilt, in this wretched business, greater than another, it is that we have *stooped* to be the carriers of these miserable beings from Africa to the West Indies for all the other powers of Europe. And now, Sir, if we retire from the Trade altogether, I ask, Where is that fund which is to be raised at once by other nations, equal to the purchase of 30 or 40,000 Slaves? A fund, which if we rate them at 40l. or 50l. each, cannot make a capital of less than a million and a half, or two millions of money. From what branch of their commerce is it that these European nations will draw together a fund to *feed this monster?*—*To keep alive this detestable commerce?*—And even if they should make the attempt, will not that immense Chasm, which must instantly be created in the other parts of their trade, from which this vast capital must be withdrawn in order to supply the Slave Trade, be filled up by yourselves?—Will not these branches of commerce

which they must leave, and from which they must withdraw their industry and their capitals, in order to apply them to the Slave Trade, be then taken up by British merchants?—Will you not even in this case, find your capital flow into these deserted channels?—Will not *your* capital be turned from the Slave Trade to that natural and innocent commerce from which they must withdraw their capitals in proportion as they take up the traffick in the flesh and blood of their fellow-creatures?

The Committee sees, I trust, how little ground of objection to our proposition there is in this part of our adversaries argument.

Having now detained the House so long, all that I will further add, shall be on that important subject, the civilization of Africa, which I have already shewn that I consider as the leading feature in this question. Grieved am I to think that there should be a single person in this country, much more that there should be a single member in the British Parliament, who can look on the present dark uncultivated and uncivilized state of that continent, as a ground for continuing the Slave Trade,—as a ground not only for refusing to attempt the improvement of Africa, but even for hindering and intercepting every ray of light which might otherwise break in upon her,—as a ground for refusing to her the common chance and the common means, with which other nations have been blessed, of emerging from their native barbarism.

Here, as in every other branch of this extensive question, the argument of our adversaries pleads against them; for, surely, Sir, the present deplorable state of Africa, especially when we reflect that her chief calamities are to be ascribed to us, calls for our generous aid, rather than justifies any despair on our part of her recovery, and still less any further repetition of our injuries.

I will not much longer fatigue the attention of the House; but this point has impressed itself so deeply on my mind, that I must trouble the Committee with a few additional observations. Are we justified, I ask, on any one ground of theory, or by

by any one instance to be found in the history of the world, from its very beginning to this day, in forming the supposition which I am now combating? Are we justified in supposing that the particular practice which we encourage in Africa, of men's selling each other for slaves, is any symptom of a barbarism that is incurable? Are we justified in supposing that even the practice of offering up human sacrifices proves a total incapacity for civilization? I believe it will be found (and perhaps much more generally than is supposed) that both the trade in slaves, and the still more savage custom of offering human sacrifices, obtained in former periods, throughout many of those nations which now, by the blessings of Providence, and by a long progression of improvements, are advanced the farthest in civilization. I believe, Sir, that, if we will reflect an instant, we shall find that this observation comes directly home to *our own selves*; and that, on the same ground on which *we* now are disposed to proscribe *Africa* for ever, from all possibility of improvement, *we ourselves* might, in like manner, have been proscribed and for ever shut out from all the blessings which *we* now enjoy.

There was a time, Sir, which it may be fit sometimes to revive in the remembrance of our countrymen, when even human sacrifices are said to have been offered in this island. But I would peculiarly observe on this day, for it is a case precisely in point, that *the very practice of the Slave Trade once prevailed among us*. Slaves, as we may read in Henry's History of Great Britain, were formerly an *established article of our exports*. "Great numbers," he says, "were exported like "cattle, from the British coast, and were to be seen exposed "for sale in the Roman market." It does not distinctly appear, by what means they were procured; but there was unquestionably no small resemblance, in this particular point, between the case of *our ancestors* and that of the *present wretched natives of Africa*—for the historian tells you that "adultery, "witchcraft and debt were probably some of the chief sources "of supplying the Roman market with British Slaves—that "prisoners taken in war were added to the number—and that

“ there might lie among them some *unfortunate gamesters* “ who, after having lost all their goods, at length staked “ themselves, their wives, and their children.” Every one of these sources of slavery has been stated, and almost precisely in the same terms, to be at this hour a source of slavery in Africa. And these circumstances, Sir, with a solitary instance or two of human sacrifices, furnish the alleged proofs, that Africa labours under a *natural incapacity* for civilization; that it is enthusiasm and fanaticism to think that she can ever enjoy the knowledge and the morals of Europe; that Providence never intended her to rise above a state of barbarism; that Providence has irrevocably doomed her to be only a nursery for Slaves for us free and civilized Europeans. Allow of this principle, as applied to Africa, and I should be glad to know why it might not also have been applied to ancient and uncivilized Britain. Why might not some Roman Senator, reasoning on the principles of some Honourable Gentlemen, and pointing to *British Barbarians*, have predicted with equal boldness “ *There is a people that will never rise to civilization—there is a people destined never to be free—a people without the understanding necessary for the attainment of useful arts; depressed by the hand of nature below the level of the human species; and created to form a supply of Slaves for the rest of the world.*” Might not this have been said, according to the principles, which we now hear stated in all respects as fairly and as truly of Britain herself, at that period of her history, as it can now be said by us of the inhabitants of Africa?

We, Sir, have long since emerged from barbarism—we have almost forgotten that we were once barbarians—we are now raised to a situation which exhibits a striking contrast to every circumstance, by which a Roman might have characterised us, and by which we now characterize Africa. There is indeed one thing wanting to complete the contrast, and to clear us altogether from the imputation of acting even to this hour as Barbarians; for we continue to this hour a barbarous traffic in Slaves: we continue it even yet in spite of all our great

great and undeniable pretensions to civilization. We were once as obscure among the nations of the earth, as savage in our manners, as debased in our morals, as degraded in our understandings, as these unhappy Africans are at present. But in the lapse of a long series of years, by a progression slow, and for a time, almost imperceptible, we have become rich in a variety of acquirements, favoured above measure in the gifts of Providence, unrivalled in commerce, pre-eminent in arts, foremost in the pursuits of philosophy and science, and established in all the blessings of civil society: We are in the possession of peace, of happiness, and of liberty; we are under the guidance of a mild and beneficent religion; and we are protected by impartial laws, and the purest administration of justice: we are living under a system of government, which our own happy experience leads us to pronounce, the best and wisest which has ever yet been framed; a system which has become the admiration of the world. From all these blessings, we must for ever have been shut out, had there been any truth in those principles which some Gentlemen have not hesitated to lay down as applicable to the case of Africa.—Had those principles been true, we ourselves had languished to this hour in that miserable state of ignorance, brutality, and degradation, in which history proves our ancestors to have been immersed. Had other nations adopted these principles in their conduct towards us; had other nations applied to Great Britain the reasoning which some of the Senators of this very Island now apply to Africa,—ages might have passed without our emerging from barbarism; and we who are enjoying the blessings of British civilization, of British laws, and British liberty, might, at this hour, have been little superior, either in morals, in knowledge, or refinement, to the rude inhabitants of the Coast of Guinea.

If then we feel that this perpetual confinement in the fetters of brutal ignorance, would have been the greatest calamity which could have befallen us; if we view with gratitude and exultation the contrast between the peculiar blessings we enjoy,

and

and the wretchedness of the ancient inhabitants of Britain,—if we shudder to think of the misery which would still have overwhelmed us, had Great Britain continued to the present times to be the mart for Slaves to the more civilized nations of the world, through some cruel policy of theirs, GOD forbid that we should any longer subject *Africa* to the same dreadful scourge, and preclude the light of knowledge, which has reached every other quarter of the globe, from having access to her coasts.

I trust we shall no longer continue this commerce, to the destruction of every improvement on that wide Continent; and shall not consider ourselves as conferring too great a boon, in restoring its inhabitants to the rank of human beings. I trust we shall not think ourselves too liberal, if, by Abolishing the Slave Trade, we give them the same common chance of civilization with other parts of the world, and that we shall now allow to Africa the opportunity—the hope—the prospect of attaining to the same blessings which we ourselves, through the favourable dispensations of Divine Providence, have been permitted, at a much more early period, to enjoy. If we listen to the voice of reason and duty, and pursue this night the line of conduct which they prescribe, some of us may live to see a reverse of that picture, from which we now turn our eyes with shame and regret. We may live to behold the Natives of Africa, engaged in the calm occupations of industry, in the pursuits of a just and legitimate commerce. We may behold the beams of science and philosophy breaking in upon their land, which at some happy period in still later times may blaze with full lustre; and joining their influence to that of pure religion, may illuminate and invigorate the most distant extremities of that immense continent. Then may we hope that even Africa (though last of all the quarters of the globe) shall enjoy at length in the evening of her days, those blessings which have descended so plentifully upon us in a much earlier period of the world. Then also will Europe, participating in her improvement and prosperity, receive an ample recompence for the tardy kindness, (if kindness it can be called)

called) of no longer hindering that continent from extricating herself out of the darkness which, in other more fortunate regions, has been so much more speedily dispelled.

— *Nos primus equis oriens offlavit anhelis ;
Illi sera rubens accendit lumina vesper.*

Then, Sir, may be applied to Africa, those words originally used indeed with a different view :

His demum exactis —————

*Devenere locos lato, et amena vireta
Fortunatorum nemorum, sedesque beatas ;
Largior hic campos Aether et lumine vestit
Purpureo :*

It is in this view, Sir,—it is an atonement for our long and cruel injustice towards Africa, that the measure proposed by my Honourable Friend most forcibly recommends itself to my mind. The great and happy change to be expected in the state of her inhabitants, is of all the various and important benefits of the Abolition, in my estimation, incomparably the most extensive and important.

I shall vote, Sir, against the adjournment ; and I shall also oppose to the utmost every proposition, which in any way may tend either to prevent, or even to postpone for an hour, the total Abolition of the Slave Trade: a measure which, on all the various grounds which I have stated, we are bound, by the most pressing and indispensable duty, to adopt.

SIR WILLIAM DOLBEN, Chairman of the Committee, then said, that the Motion originally made, was, " That it is the opinion of this Committee, that the Trade carried on by British subjects for the purpose of obtaining Slaves on the Coast of Africa, ought to be abolished :" since which it

had

had been moved, that the word, "gradually," should be inserted after the words, "ought to be," and before the word, "abolished;" and that since moving the above amendment, a motion had been made for the Chairman now to leave the Chair. The question which he had to put therefore, was, "That the Chairman should now leave the Chair." On which the Committee having divided,

The Ayes were - - - - - 87

Noes - - - - - 234

Majority against Mr. Jenkinson's Motion, that the Chairman should leave the Chair, - 147

SIR WILLIAM DOLBEN then put the Question, that the word, "gradually," should be inserted in Mr. Wilberforce's Motion. The Committee having divided,

The Ayes, (for inserting the word
"gradually,") were - - - 193

The Noes, (against agreeing that the Abolition should be gradual) were 125

Majority in favour of *gradual* Abolition, rather than an *immediate* one, - - - - - 68

The CHAIRMAN then put the amended Question, viz. "That it is the opinion of this Committee, that the Trade carried on by British Subjects for the purpose of obtaining Slaves on the Coast of Africa, ought to be gradually abolished." The Committee having divided,

The Ayes (for a *gradual* Abolition,) were - 230

The Noes (against *any* Abolition,) were - - 85

Majority for agreeing to a *gradual* Abolition, - 145

The House having on the 25th of April resolved itself into the same Committee, SIR WILLIAM DOLBEN being in the Chair, the Right Honourable Mr. DUNDAS moved,
 " That it shall not be lawful to import any African Negroes into any British Colonies or Plantations, in Ships owned or navigated by British Subjects, at any time after the First Day of January, 1800."

Upon which LORD MORNINGTON moved, as an Amendment, that the year " 1793," be substituted in the place of the year " 1800."

After a long debate, the Committee having divided, the Ayes in favour of Lord Mornington's amendment were, 109
 Noes, - 158
 Majority against abolishing the Slave Trade
 on January 1, 1793, - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 49

On the 28th of April, the House having again resolved itself into the same Committee, Mr. BEAUFROY being in the Chair, the Right Honourable Mr. DUNDAS again moved,
 " That it shall not be lawful to import any African Negroes into any British Colonies or Plantations, in Ships owned or navigated by British Subjects, at any time after the First Day of January, 1800."

Upon which Lord Mornington moved as an amendment, That the year " 1795" be substituted in the place of the year 1800.

The Committee, after a long debate having divided, the Ayes, in favour of Lord Mornington's amendment, were 121
 Noes, - 161
 Majority against abolishing the Slave Trade
 in the year 1795, - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 40

SIR EDWARD KNATCHBULL then moved, that the year
 " 1796," should be substituted in the place of the year
 " 1800."

The Committee having divided, the

Ayes, in favour of Sir E. Knatchbull's amendment, were 151
 Noes 132

Majority in favour of Sir E. Knatchbull's amendment for abolishing the Slave Trade on the
 First of January, 1796, 19

P. I. N. G.